

Nose, eyes and mouth – like other opiates, methadone dries up these bodily fluids. This is why you get a runny nose and streaming eyes during detoxification.

Brain - methadone prevents opiate withdrawal symptoms and reduces the desire to use heroin, but it does not give you the same high as heroin.

Chest – all opiates and opioids reduce your breathing reflex. With your usual dose this effect will be too mild to notice, but in overdose or use of methadone with heroin, death may occur because of breathing failure.

Suppression of the cough reflex may also increase your chances of getting a chest infection.

Stomach and bowels – all opioids and opiates can cause nausea (a feeling of wanting to vomit) in the early stages of use, but this is not a persistent problem unless there are other causes, e.g. stomach ulcers, pregnancy or alcohol dependence.

All opiates and methadone slow your gut down leading to constipation. This can be prevented by eating fruit and vegetables, drinking plenty of non-alcoholic fluids and taking exercise.

Skin – like other opiates, methadone can cause excessive sweating and scratching in some people.

Sex - sexual desire (or libido) is reduced by all opiates and methadone. These drugs may also cause impotence (failure to maintain an erection) and delayed ejaculation/orgasm. Generally, sex life improves when people transfer from street heroin to methadone. Many women who take heroin have stopped having monthly periods.

It is important for that you remember even if you are not having periods you can still get pregnant.

If you would like help with accessing contraception please discuss this with your drugs worker, doctor or the Sexual Health Clinics at the hospital.

Long term effects – once you stop taking methadone the effects on your body will stop. Methadone does not cause long lasting damage to your organs or bones.

IMPORTANT Please ask for a **FREE LOCKABLE MEDICATION BOX** to store your methadone and other medicines safely away from young children.

Contact information

Countywide Specialist Substance Misuse Service

West Gloucestershire Team	01452 891260
East Gloucestershire Team	01242 845614
Criminal Justice Drugs Team	01452 545779
Branchlea Cross	01242 845600

Primary Care Substance Misuse Service

Countywide Team	01452 523151
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All you ever wanted to know about Methadone, but were afraid to ask

What is Methadone?

Methadone is an opioid, it belongs to the same class of drugs as heroin, palfium, diconal, and codeine. If you take too much of it or take another opiate on top of your prescription, you risk overdosing or death.

Is Methadone dangerous?

Methadone is a sedative and if taken with any other sedatives, alcohol or tranquillisers like valium or temazepam it could kill you.

A dose of methadone given to someone who has not built up a tolerance to opiates is fatal.

It is vitally important that children have no possible way of taking your methadone, a dose of just 10mls (two teaspoons) could kill them. If there are children in your house, or children that visit your house regularly, please tell your Care Co-ordinator who can provide you with a lockable medicine box.

Is methadone more addictive than heroin?

As methadone is an opioid, it is addictive.

Some people find the withdrawals from methadone worse than the withdrawals from heroin, but this is not always the case.

Methadone is a longer acting drug than heroin, so the withdrawals may last longer, but severe withdrawals are rarely a problem with modern detoxification techniques.

Studies have shown that detox medication is more helpful for people detoxifying from methadone than from heroin.

How much methadone will I need to take?

- The dose of methadone you require varies according to the amount of opiates you are using at present. It may be adjusted throughout your treatment. The usual recommended dose is between 60 and 120 mg per day
- NTA (National Treatment Agency) guidelines recommend that you are supervised taking your methadone for at least the first three months of your treatment. This is to make sure that you are taking your methadone safely and the dosage is correct for you

How will I be monitored?

Whilst on methadone you may be tempted to use heroin or other opiates.

Methadone and other opiates can be detected in the urine. We can check whether you are taking your methadone and also whether you are using opiates on top of your prescription.

We can also tell if urine has been watered down or whether the sample given is urine.

Urine testing is used to check that you are sticking to your prescription or using other opiates on top. It can also tell if you are not taking your Methadone.

What else do I need to do other than take the Methadone?

As we are prescribing a controlled and powerful drug, we need to see you on a regular basis. You will have regular appointments with both your Care Co-ordinator and a doctor.

Failure to attend appointments will usually result in your prescription being stopped until you have made contact with the service again.

Medication such as methadone helps you get some stability in your life. It is not a miracle drug and you will need to work with your Care Co-ordinator on other issues to build up a healthy and rewarding lifestyle.

Am I safe to drive on Methadone?

Methadone and opiates can affect your ability to drive. It is your responsibility to inform the DVLA and your insurance company that you are prescribed methadone.

The DVLA will want to see evidence that you have been stable on prescribed medication for 12 months (i.e. you have not been using any street drugs) before allowing you your licence back.

If you fail to report your treatment and drug history it may make your vehicle insurance invalid.

How does Methadone affect my body?

Eyes – like other opiates, methadone makes the pupils of the eye smaller, however this has very little effect on your eyesight.

Teeth – the methadone that we prescribe (Physeptone) does not contain sugar, however, opiates tend to cause tooth decay because they make your mouth dry and change the acid balance in the saliva.

It is important to keep your teeth clean and see a dentist. Please ask if you are having problems getting to see a dentist as we can refer you.