

Information about Methadone

What is methadone?

Methadone is a drug commonly used to treat opiate addiction and relieve pain. Methadone is not intended to treat addictions to other drugs such as alcohol, cocaine, marijuana or other non-opioid drugs. Methadone blocks the receptors in the brain that are affected by opiates such as heroin and prescription drugs, enabling users to gradually detox for opiates without experiencing painful withdrawal symptoms.

How does methadone work?

When individuals start using opiates, their brain requires a constant supply of the drug to occupy the receptors in the brain. Methadone occupies these receptors; blocking the high opiates provide and making the user feel more stable. Methadone reduces the drug cravings and harsh withdrawal symptoms that often lead to relapse without creating the sense of euphoria associated with the abuse of morphine, heroin, and other opiates. Methadone's effects last between 24 and 36 hours, meaning that most patients benefit from only one daily dose.

Is methadone safe?

When used as prescribed, methadone can safely be taken continuously over a period of weeks, months, and even years without harsh side effects. Accordingly to the U.S Office of National Drug Control Policy, methadone is "a rigorously well-tested medication that is safe and efficacious for the treatment of narcotic withdrawal and dependence."

Other important facts to know about the safety of methadone are:

- Methadone is a legal medication that is produced by licensed pharmaceutical companies and strictly monitors using quality control standards.
- Methadone is administered under the supervision of a physician, following strict guidelines.
- Methadone does not impair mental functioning and is not sedating or intoxicating.
- Patients on methadone are able to work, drive, feel pain and normal emotional reactions, and go about their ordinary activities.
- Methadone is pregnancy safe.

Is methadone effective?

Methadone has been used for more than 30 years as an effective treatment for opioid addiction. Decades of scientific research have demonstrated methadone's effectiveness. For example, a 1994 study found that "rates of illegal drug use, criminal activity, and hospitalization were lower for [methadone maintenance] patients than for addicts in any other drug treatment program." The National Institute of Drug Abuse Reports that weekly heroin use decreased by 69 percent among outpatient methadone maintenance patients.

What side effects will I experience if I begin taking methadone?

Studies show that there are no serious side effects associated with the medically supervised use of methadone. Some people have reported minor issues such as constipation, water retention, drowsiness, skin rash, excessive sweating, and changes in libido. But in the majority of cases, these symptoms subside once the individual finds the proper dosage for their individual needs.

What are the benefits of methadone maintenance?

In addition to being safe and effective, methadone treatment is one of the most affordable options available to opiate addicts. When used as prescribed, methadone has been proven to relieve withdrawal symptoms, reduce opiate cravings and return chemical and emotional balance. By enhancing the individual's ability to function, methadone treatment improves the user's relationship, career and overall stability.

Am I substituting one type of addiction for another?

Methadone has very different physical effects than heroin, morphine and other opiate drugs. It is not a drug substitute, but rather a medication used in an approved course of treatment to overcome opiate addiction. Methadone also helps patients reduce typical drug seeking behaviors associated with opiate abuse, such as unsuccessful efforts to stop using, forsaking obligations to get more drugs and using in spite of negative consequences.

Will methadone show up on a drug test?

Methadone will not result in a positive test for opiates such as morphine or heroin. The only way for a company or other organization to detect methadone is to test for it specifically, which is not a common practice. People who are participation in approved methadone maintenance programs are not abusing illegal drug.

Will taking methadone affect my ability to drive a car?

The law does not prohibit methadone patients from operating motor vehicles or other forms of machinery. When taken as prescribed, methadone does not produce sedation or intoxication.

How long will I need to take methadone?

The length of methadone maintenance treatment program depends on a number of personal factors. Many patients remain in treatment for many months, and some continue to use methadone indefinitely (as with many chronic medical conditions). While methadone can safely be taken for months and even years, safe withdrawal from methadone is possible. As with any type of long-term medication regimen, ending methadone use must be done slowly, carefully and with supervision.

How can I learn more about methadone maintenance and methadone treatment programs?

For more information about methadone maintenance and methadone treatment centers, call 903-520-4710