

Methotrexate and Folic Acid Review

Aim

- To ensure an appropriate dose of folic acid is taken as advised and minimise the risk of adverse drug reactions due to methotrexate.
- To maximise the effectiveness of methotrexate and ensure is not limited by taking folic acid on the same day.

Background/ Summary

- Methotrexate is prescribed as a once a week treatment. Folic acid should be routinely co-prescribed with methotrexate in order to reduce adverse effects and toxicity, mainly gastrointestinal and haematological toxicity, thus improving continuation of therapy and compliance.
- Methotrexate 2.5mg tablets are preferred ([as per C&P CCG netFormulary](#)) 10mg tablets are not recommended in order to reduce the risk of dispensing errors.
- Folic acid is usually taken on a 'non-methotrexate' day.
- All patients on methotrexate should normally be started on folic acid at a dose of at least 5mg per week (**do not give on methotrexate day**).
- A typical dose is folic acid 5mg once each week, taken two to three days after methotrexate dose. Sometimes the dose/frequency of folic acid is increased and occasionally folinic acid is used instead.

Guidance for Action

- *Establish how this project will be actioned with the GP:*
- *Ensure GP agreement is completed.*
- *Agree method of communication with patients if required (MOT/Practice to contact patient or GP to handle consultation).*
- Identify patients prescribed methotrexate and split into two groups as follows and in all cases ensure there is local shared care guidance (SCG) in place and adhered to: [C&P CCG Shared Care Guidance: Methotrexate](#).
- Patients with methotrexate on repeat list but **NO folic acid prescribed**.
- Patients with both methotrexate and folic acid on their repeat list.

For Group 1

- Highlight these patients to the prescriber.
- If there is a folic acid dose and frequency recorded in a hospital document alert the prescriber to the date of this letter and the dose specified.

For Group 2

- Ensure the dose and frequency of folic acid is prescribed as per last hospital letter.
- If not specified on the dose, add the following: "Do not take folic acid on the same day as your methotrexate tablets".

Additional Advice for patients

The difference between methotrexate and folic acid should be explained to them and the visual differences between the two tablets, including distinguishing features should be highlighted. Ensure this is mentioned at point of dispensing.

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References

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2. British National Formulary: Folic acid. Accessed via <https://bnf.nice.org.uk>
3. UKMI Q and A What is the dose of folic acid to use with methotrexate. Last updated June 2020
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