



For further information:

Drugaid

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Methadone

Methadone

Meth, Green, Phy, Physeptone, Juice, Medicine

What does it look like?



What is methadone?

Methadone was first synthesised by chemists in Germany in 1938. It was originally tagged with the unimaginative name of Hochst-10820.

The chemical was found to have a similar pharmacological action to morphine, despite its very different chemical structure, and it is much longer-acting.

The introduction in the mid 70s of smokable Middle Eastern brown heroin resulted in many users arriving for treatment not expecting to inject their drugs, encouraging the clinics to move towards using oral methadone for treatment.

Methadone is a synthetic opiate. It is a strong painkiller.

Methadone is most commonly a green sticky liquid taken orally. However, there are different colours available. It is also possible to get methadone in tablet form.

It is longer lasting than heroin, which means that you can take it once a day and experience no withdrawal symptoms for 24 hours.

What will it do to me?

Methadone is highly addictive. It has similar effects to heroin, but has a slower onset of effects and is more long lasting. It takes 2 to 3 days for the dose to build up in your body and become most effective.

When stabilised on methadone you do not experience euphoric effects and tolerance does not develop like many other opiates, so you do not need ever-increasing doses. Tolerance to methadone's pain-killing effects does develop however, meaning you experience pain normally although trying to explain this to a nurse or doctor when you're in A & E is another matter entirely.

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Methadone does not produce the pleasurable effects associated with heroin. If you have been addicted to heroin, it can prevent any withdrawal symptoms and give you freedom from the need to use throughout the day.

The main side-effects of methadone are sweating, reduced libido, constipation, itching skin, fluid retention, lethargy, irregular or ceased periods and depression. All the effects of methadone vary depending on the individual and the dose.

Methadone can be prescribed with medical support for many years without risks of medical complications. However, it has been linked to heart irregularities, in particular in 'high doses' (100ml and above). This can be managed appropriately.

More than twice as many people die each year from methadone as they do from heroin. Further, while physical withdrawal from heroin is over in a week, for methadone the sickness can carry on and on, for a month or even longer.

When does it become a problem?

- If you use methadone every day for a number of days, your body can become dependent on it.
- When you have not used any methadone for a period of time you may begin to experience withdrawal symptoms. It is agreed amongst opiate users that the withdrawal from methadone is worse than heroin, and is best managed with medical support. These can include a variety of extremely uncomfortable symptoms including pain, anxiety, muscle spasms, and insomnia.

Staying safer

- Prescribed methadone is the safest way to take it, with appropriate medical support.
- It is recommended that methadone is taken once every 24 hours, at the same time each day.
- Taking methadone with other substances (especially alcohol, heroin and benzodiazepines) increases the risk of overdose.
- Some people start using more crack when they go onto methadone to get a buzz. This can send you back into chaos and means you have no money to get involved in anything else.
- Getting psycho social support while you are on methadone will increase your chances of changing your life for the better.
- Moving from the scoring, using, making money cycle that many people experience when they are using heroin to a more stable life with methadone can result in boredom, lethargy and loneliness. Be prepared for this by getting involved in diversionary activities that are meaningful to you and psycho social support. Drugaid can help with this.

Contact Drugaid for further support and to explore treatment options.

The Law

Under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 methadone is a Class A drug.

Penalties

Possession (without a prescription):

7 years' imprisonment or a fine or both.

Supply: life imprisonment or a fine or both.

Production: life imprisonment or a fine or both.