



## PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Methadone

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

### **Brand Names: US**

Dolophine; Methadone HCl Intensol; Methadose; Methadose Sugar-Free

### **Brand Names: Canada**

Metadol; Metadol-D; Methadose

### **Warning**

#### **For all uses of this drug:**

- This drug has an opioid drug in it. Opioid drugs can put your child at risk for addiction, abuse, and misuse. Misuse or abuse of this drug can lead to overdose and death. If you have questions, talk with your child's doctor.
- Your child will be watched closely to make sure your child does not misuse, abuse, or become addicted to this drug.
- This drug may cause very bad and sometimes deadly breathing problems. Call the doctor right away if your child has slow, shallow, or trouble breathing.

- The chance of very bad and sometimes deadly breathing problems may be greater when your child first starts this drug or anytime the dose is raised. Talk with your child's doctor.
- Even one dose of this drug may be deadly if it is taken by someone else or by accident, especially in children. If this drug is taken by someone else or by accident, get medical help right away.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- A type of abnormal heartbeat (prolonged QT interval) has happened with this drug. Sometimes, this has led to another type of unsafe abnormal heartbeat (torsades de pointes). Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a fast or abnormal heartbeat, or if your child passes out.
- This drug has an opioid drug in it. Severe side effects have happened when opioid drugs were used with benzodiazepines or other drugs that may make you drowsy or slow your actions. This includes slow or troubled breathing and death. Benzodiazepines include drugs like alprazolam, diazepam, and lorazepam. Benzodiazepines may be used to treat many health problems like anxiety, trouble sleeping, or seizures. If you have questions, talk with your doctor.
- Many other drugs interact with this drug. These drugs can raise the chance of side effects as well as very bad and

sometimes deadly breathing problems. Talk with the doctor and pharmacist to make sure that it is safe for your child to use this drug with all of his/her other drugs.

- Be sure your child does not drink alcohol or use products that have alcohol. Unsafe and sometimes deadly effects may happen.
- Get medical help right away if your child does not respond, answer, or react like normal; feels very sleepy or dizzy; passes out; or will not wake up.

### **If your child is pregnant:**

- Using this drug for a long time during pregnancy may lead to withdrawal in the newborn baby. This can be life-threatening. Talk with the doctor.

### **Drug addiction:**

- If your child is taking this drug to treat drug addiction, your child must be in a certified care program to get it.

### **What is this drug used for?**

- It is used to ease very bad pain.
- It is used to treat addiction problems.
- It may be given to your child for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

### **If taking this drug for pain:**

- It is only to be used when around-the-clock (continuous) care is needed for a long time. It is also only to be used when other pain drugs do not treat your child's pain well enough or your child cannot take them.

## **What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?**

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child has any of these health problems: Lung or breathing problems like asthma, trouble breathing, or sleep apnea; high levels of carbon dioxide in the blood, or stomach or bowel block or narrowing.
- If your child has taken certain drugs for depression or certain other health problems in the last 14 days. This includes isocarboxazid, phenelzine, or tranylcypromine. Very high blood pressure may happen.
- If your child is taking any of these drugs: Linezolid or methylene blue.
- If your child is taking any of these drugs: Buprenorphine, butorphanol, nalbuphine, or pentazocine.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health

problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for your child to take this drug with all of his/her drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

### **What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?**

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have your child avoid tasks or actions that call for alertness until you see how this drug affects your child. These are things like riding a bike, playing sports, or using items such as scissors, lawnmowers, electric scooters, toy cars, or motorized vehicles.
- To lower the chance of feeling dizzy or passing out, have your child rise slowly if your child has been sitting or lying down. Have your child be careful going up and down stairs.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your child's health care providers and lab workers that your child takes this drug.
- Do not give this drug with other strong pain drugs or pain patches without talking to your child's doctor first.
- Do not give your child more of this drug than what the doctor told you to give. Giving more of this drug than you are told may raise the chance of very bad side effects.

- If your child has been taking this drug for a long time or at high doses, it may not work as well and your child may need higher doses to get the same effect. This is known as tolerance. Call the doctor if this drug stops working well. Do not give more than ordered.
- Long-term or regular use of opioid drugs like this drug may lead to dependence. Lowering the dose or stopping this drug all of a sudden may cause a greater risk of withdrawal or other severe problems. Talk to your child's doctor before you lower the dose or stop giving this drug. You will need to follow the doctor's instructions. Tell your child's doctor if your child has more pain, mood changes, thoughts of suicide, or any other bad effects.
- This drug may raise the chance of seizures in some people, including people who have had seizures in the past. Talk to the doctor to see if your child has a greater chance of seizures while taking this drug.
- Long-term use of an opioid drug may lead to lower sex hormone levels. Call your child's doctor if your child has a lowered interest in sex, fertility problems, no menstrual period (females), or change in sex ability (males).

**If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:**

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if your child takes it during pregnancy. If your child is pregnant or gets pregnant while taking this drug, call the doctor right away.

- Tell your child's doctor if your child is breast-feeding a baby. This drug passes into breast milk and may harm your child's baby.

## **What are some side effects that I need to call my child's doctor about right away?**

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

### **All products:**

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of low potassium levels like muscle pain or weakness, muscle cramps, or a heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Signs of low magnesium levels like mood changes, muscle pain or weakness, muscle cramps or spasms, seizures, shakiness, not hungry, very bad upset stomach or throwing up, or a heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Very bad dizziness or passing out.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Slow heartbeat.

- Feeling confused.
- Very bad constipation.
- Feeling very tired or weak.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Mood changes.
- Seizures.
- Very bad belly pain.
- Very bad headache.
- Shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Not able to sleep.
- Trouble passing urine.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Change in eyesight.
- Feeling very sleepy.
- A severe and sometimes deadly problem called serotonin syndrome may happen if your child takes this drug with certain other drugs. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has agitation; change in balance; confusion; hallucinations; fever; fast or abnormal heartbeat; flushing; muscle twitching or stiffness; seizures; shivering or shaking; sweating a lot; severe diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up; or severe headache.



- Taking an opioid pain drug like this drug may lead to a rare but very bad adrenal gland problem. Call your child's doctor right away if your child has very bad dizziness or passing out, very bad upset stomach or throwing up, or if your child feels less hungry, very tired, or very weak.

### **Injection:**

- Very bad irritation where the shot was given.

### **What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

### **All products:**

- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Constipation.
- Dizziness.
- Feeling sleepy.
- Headache.
- Sweating a lot.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Belly pain.

### **Injection:**

- Irritation where the shot is given.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

### **How is this drug best given?**

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

### **All oral products:**

- Keep giving this drug to your child as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child feels well.
- Give this drug at the same time of day.
- Give this drug with or without food. Give with food if it causes an upset stomach.
- Give this drug by mouth only.
- Do not use for fast pain relief or on an as needed basis.
- Do not use to ease pain after surgery if your child has not been taking drugs like this drug.
- Do not let your child inject or snort this drug. Doing any of these things can cause very bad side effects like trouble breathing and death from overdose.

### **All liquid products:**

- Make sure you have the right liquid; there is more than one strength.
- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.
- Do not use a household teaspoon or tablespoon to measure this drug. Doing so could lead to the dose being too high.
- Be sure that you know how to measure your dose. Dosing errors can lead to accidental overdose and death. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or pharmacist.

### **Liquid (concentrate):**

- Mix with water or other liquid as you have been told by the doctor.

### **Effervescent tablets:**

- Drop dispersible tablet in fruit juice or water. Have your child drink when dissolved.
- After drinking, rinse the rest of the drug in the glass with more juice or water and have your child drink.

### **Injection:**

- It is given as a shot into a muscle, vein, or into the fatty part of the skin.

### **Drug addiction:**

- You may need to go to a clinic for your child's dose.

## **What do I do if my child misses a dose?**

### **Injection:**

- Call your child's doctor to find out what to do.

### **All products:**

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

### **Drug addiction:**

- Call your child's doctor to find out what to do.

## **How do I store and/or throw out this drug?**

### **All oral products:**

- Sometimes this drug is stored in a hospital, clinic, or doctor's office. If you are storing this drug at home, store at room temperature.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Protect from light.

### **Injection:**

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your child's doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

## **All products:**

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

## **General drug facts**

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

## **Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer**

This information should not be used to decide whether or not to take this medicine or any other medicine. Only the

healthcare provider has the knowledge and training to decide which medicines are right for a specific patient. This information does not endorse any medicine as safe, effective, or approved for treating any patient or health condition. This is only a brief summary of general information about this medicine. It does NOT include all information about the possible uses, directions, warnings, precautions, interactions, adverse effects, or risks that may apply to this medicine. This information is not specific medical advice and does not replace information you receive from the healthcare provider. You must talk with the healthcare provider for complete information about the risks and benefits of using this medicine.

### **Last Reviewed Date**

2018-10-01

### **Copyright**

© 2019 Wolters Kluwer Clinical Drug Information, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit [www.mskcc.org/pe](http://www.mskcc.org/pe) to search our virtual library.

---

Methadone - Last updated on November 18, 2019

©2019 Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center