



Medications at Home: Methadone (Methadone Intensol™, Methadose®)

The neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) team celebrates with you as your baby goes home! After graduation from the NICU, your baby will need medication to stay well.

Why does my baby need this medication?

- Methadone is used to help with withdrawal symptoms in babies exposed to illegal or prescription drugs before birth.
- Methadone works like the narcotic medication the mother took while she was pregnant. By giving the same type of drug and slowly weaning from it over time, the baby will no longer need the medicine.
- Methadone helps to decrease the symptoms of fussiness, tremors, inconsolable crying, and stiffness.

How, how much, and when is this medication given to my baby?

- Methadone is a liquid and will be given in the baby's mouth.
- Wash and dry your hands before giving your baby the medicine.
- Using a children's measuring device, available at a pharmacy, give the exact dose the doctor ordered for your baby.
- Administer methadone using a syringe and slowly drip it into the inside of the baby's cheek or mix it in 5–10 ml of milk and have the baby suck it out of a bottle.
- Make sure the baby swallows/takes the entire dose.
- The amount of medicine has been carefully calculated based on your baby's weight and needed response from the medicine. Do not change the dosage without talking to your baby's provider.
- Your baby's provider will be working with you to wean your baby from the medication. Follow the exact dose to be successful at getting your baby weaned off as quickly and as comfortably as possible.
- Dose Instructions: _____

What are possible side effects?

- Constipation
- Sleepiness
- Slow breathing, slow heart rate, and low blood pressure
- Nausea and vomiting
- Itchy skin
- Small pupils in the eyes

Call your baby's provider right away if your baby has

- a new skin rash—do not give the medicine if this develops
- become sleepy and is not feeding well
- a fast heartbeat
- become overly tired or weak
- severe constipation
- severe nausea and vomiting.

Call 911 if your baby has

- trouble breathing—wheezing, coughing
- fever
- itching
- blue skin



- swelling of lips, tongue, or throat
- signs of an overdose:
 - hard to wake up
 - not breathing
 - slow heart rate
 - blue skin

What if my baby misses a dose?

- Give the missed dose as soon as you remember, if it is within an hour of the missed dose, and stick to the regular medication schedule.
- If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and stick to the regular medication schedule.
- **Never** give a double dose.
- Call your baby's provider if your baby misses two or more doses.

Important Medication Safety Tips

- Only give your baby medicine prescribed by your baby's provider. Do not share prescription medicines with other children or adults.
- Check with your baby's provider before giving your baby any over-the-counter medicines.
- Keep all medicines out of reach of children, in the tightly closed bottles or containers they came in, and with the labels of directions given by the pharmacy.
 - Light can make the medicine not work properly.
 - Keep the bottle tightly sealed in a dark, dry place at room temperature.
- Methadone is a controlled substance, which means it has dangerous side effects if used improperly.
 - Dangerously slow breathing and nervous system depression can occur in newborns and babies younger than 3 months, so give medication only as ordered.
- Give methadone exactly as directed by your baby's provider.
 - Never stop methadone or give more or less than prescribed without first talking with your baby's provider. Too little may not be enough to help, and too much may cause harm. In the case of an overdose, immediately call the Poison Control Center at 800.222.1222. If you cannot wake your baby or he or she has stopped breathing, start cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and call your local emergency medical services (EMS) or 911 right away.
- If your baby has severe difficulty breathing or stops breathing, start CPR and call your local EMS or 911 right away.
- Always use the five *rights* when giving medication to your baby:
 - Right baby (if other children are in the home)
 - Right medication
 - Right amount (always measure the dose with the syringe or dropper provided by the pharmacy, not a common household teaspoon)
 - Right time
 - Right way (exactly as prescribed and directed by your baby's provider).
- When your baby no longer needs the medicine, mix any leftover medicine with an unwanted material like cat litter or coffee grounds. Place the mixture into a container or bag that will not leak and throw it in the trash where children and pets cannot reach it.

The above information is to help you better understand your baby's care. Always follow the instructions given by your baby's provider and pharmacist. It's always OK to ask questions if you have concerns about your baby.



Online Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org

HealthFinder.gov
www.healthfinder.gov

Institute for Safe Medication Practices
www.consumermedsafety.org

Kids Health
www.kidshealth.org

Medline Plus: Drug Information
www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/druginfo/meds

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
www.fda.gov