

## Valuable Information About Methadone

All opioids can have side effects, including serious effects like overdose and death. Methadone is the opioid with the highest risk of these effects.



Each person's body breaks down methadone differently. Any change in the dose needs to be done very carefully to avoid overdose. Methadone interacts with many medicines. These interactions can cause the amount of methadone in the body to go up or down. If the methadone level goes down, people may have more pain. On the other hand, if the level goes up, there is a higher risk of overdose. It can be complicated, so let your health care team know if any of your medicines change.

Methadone can also cause irregular heartbeats leading to sudden death. The risk of developing this is higher in certain situations including:

- patients taking diuretics (medications to remove extra fluid from the body)
- patients with liver, lung, heart or kidney problems
- patients taking other medicines that can affect the heart beat



Because of these critical risks, your provider will talk to you before prescribing methadone. Tests will need to be done, including an electrocardiogram (EKG) and blood tests. The tests will help determine if you are at risk of these side effects. While taking methadone, if the dose is changed or other medicines are added, the tests may need to be repeated.