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# What Is Methadone?

By Michaela Patafi



Methadone is part of a category called **opioids**. It was created by German doctors during World War II. When it arrived in the United States, it was used to treat people with extreme **pain**. Today, your doctor may use it as part of your treatment for an **addiction** to **heroin** or narcotic painkillers.

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Prescription Drug Abuse  
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Even though it's safer than some other narcotics, your doctor should keep a close watch on you while you take methadone. Taking it can lead to addiction or abuse.

### What Does It Do?

Methadone changes the way your **brain**

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than those of other strong painkillers like morphine. It blocks the high you get from drugs like [codeine](#), heroin, [hydrocodone](#), morphine, and [oxycodone](#).

Your doctor may prescribe methadone if you're in a lot of pain from an injury, surgery, or chronic illness.

It can also help if you're in treatment for addiction to other opioids. It can give a similar feeling and prevent withdrawal symptoms. You may hear this called replacement therapy. Methadone replaces the opioids in your system with milder effects.

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It's usually used as one part of your treatment plan. It isn't a cure for addiction.

### Uses and Side Effects



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experts say it should be at least a year, and maybe more than that. The doctor will carefully track your body's response to it and adjust your treatment. When it's time to stop taking it, he'll help you stop slowly to prevent withdrawal.

With short-term use, you may notice:

- Restlessness
- [Nausea or vomiting](#)
- Slow [breathing](#)
- [Itchy skin](#)
- Heavy [sweating](#)
- [Constipation](#)
- Sexual problems

Some side effects are more serious. Call the doctor if you:

- Have [trouble breathing](#) or can only take shallow breaths
- Feel lightheaded or [faint](#)

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- Have [hallucinations](#) or feel confused

If you use the drug for a long time, it might lead to [lung](#) and breathing problems. It can also change a woman's [menstrual cycle](#). If you [get pregnant](#), talk to your doctor about changing your dose. It can cause complications.



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