

METHADONE

DRUG NAME

Generic: Methadone

Class of drug: Opioid

Brands in Australia: Physeptone, Biodone Forte, Methadone Syrup

DOSAGE FORM

Available as a 10 mg tablet. Quantity 20.

Also available as a 5 mg/mL oral liquid.

HOW IT WORKS

Acts on opioid receptors but also blocks NMDA receptors. This “dual action” makes it useful for complex nerve pain as well as cancer pain. Used rarely in pain management.

Onset of action

- Pain relief starts within **30–60 minutes** after an oral dose.
- Peak effect may take **2–4 hours**.
- Full steady-state effect develops after several days of regular dosing.

DOSAGE & FREQUENCY

Your doctor will advise on the starting dose and guide the dose changes.

- start with _____
- if tolerated, increase to _____ after _____ days
- if necessary, increase by _____ every _____ week(s)
- if successive increases are well tolerated *and bring additional benefit*, continue to titrate up to a maximum of _____
- to be reviewed by your doctor on _____

Often titrated slowly to minimise side effects. Titration is slow due to the long half-life. Doses vary greatly between patients — always follow your doctor’s directions.

ROUTE OF ADMINISTRATION

Oral (by mouth) unless otherwise specified.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW WHILE TAKING THIS MEDICATION

- This medication may make you feel drowsy and may increase the effects of alcohol. If you are affected, do not drive or operate machinery. If you are very sleepy or have trouble staying awake, stop taking the medication and tell your doctor immediately.
- Be careful when you stand up as this medicine might make you feel dizzy if you stand up too quickly.
- *Chronic use:* look after your teeth and mouth, and get dental checks regularly, as opioids may make your mouth dry which increases risk of dental caries.

- Take exactly as prescribed — **never** change the dose on your own.
- Take at the same time each day.
- Avoid alcohol and sedatives (dangerous interaction).
- Do not stop suddenly unless advised — risk of withdrawal.

STORAGE INSTRUCTIONS

Refer to manufacturer's instructions.

DISPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS

Return unused or expired medication to your pharmacy for safe disposal.

MISSED DOSE INSTRUCTIONS

Ask your doctor or pharmacist.

EMERGENCY INSTRUCTIONS

Seek immediate medical help if you suspect overdose or experience severe side effects such as chest pain, seizures, or difficulty breathing.

COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

May include drowsiness, dizziness, dry mouth, constipation, nausea, or weight changes.

SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS

Seek urgent medical help if you:

- Take too much (overdose may cause severe drowsiness, slow or stopped breathing, pinpoint pupils, unconsciousness).
- Feel faint, dizzy, or confused.
- Experience chest pain, irregular heartbeat.

MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SIDE EFFECTS

- Constipation: Use stool softeners, increase fibre and fluids.
- Drowsiness: Avoid driving or operating machinery until you know how methadone affects you.
- Nausea: Take with food; ask your doctor about anti-nausea medicines if persistent.
- Sweating: Wear light clothing and keep hydrated.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Interactions:

- Dangerous with alcohol, benzodiazepines, or other sedatives (increased risk of death).
- May interact with antidepressants, some antibiotics, and anti-seizure medicines.
- Risk of serotonin syndrome if taken with some antidepressants or tramadol.

Precautions:

- Requires caution in patients with liver disease, kidney impairment, or heart rhythm problems.
- Can be used in pregnancy if closely monitored, but risks must be discussed with your doctor.

Elective surgery advice

- Do not stop methadone suddenly before surgery.
- You will usually continue your regular dose on the day of surgery.
- The anaesthetist must be informed — methadone can interact with anaesthetics and pain medicines.
- Extra pain relief may be needed after surgery because methadone alone may not cover surgical pain.

- Always follow your surgical team's instructions.

TITRATION DIARY

Date	Dose Taken	Side Effects	Notes (e.g., sleep, pain relief)