



AMERICAN ADDICTION TREATMENT CENTER

Methadone Education

Methadone is a substitute for the narcotic drug to which our patients are addicted. This medication will prevent withdrawal symptoms. Once a patient reaches his or her stabilization dosage, or the point where they will not feel any withdrawal symptoms or feel high, they will remain on that stabilization dose as prescribed by the Medical Director, and they will be able to function normally.

How Methadone is dispensed, and how it works:

- Patients are given a liquid form of methadone by a licensed nurse, to drink daily.
- Patients should start to feel any withdrawal symptoms or discomfort subside by the third day of continuous dosing.
- If patients continue to take methadone daily, a therapeutic or tolerance level should be reached within 8-10 days, which will prevent the effect of heroin or any other opiate from being felt. This also eliminates the craving to use opiates.
- Because methadone has a long half-life of (+)12 hours, patients will most likely not experience withdrawal symptoms for about 48 hours after the last dose.

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Methadone interactions:

- Methadone is an addictive drug and has all of the same dangers as most narcotic drugs.
- Methadone can be fatal if taken in conjunction with alcohol or with other drugs. **PATIENTS MUST NOT CONSUME ALCOHOL WHILE YOU ARE IN THIS TREATMENT PROGRAM.**
- Pentazocine, Rifampin, and Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors are examples of drugs that may produce withdrawal symptoms or severe reactions when taken with methadone.
- Naltrexone, Nubain, and Talwin are antagonist drugs. These drugs will cause severe and immediate withdrawal symptoms if taken with methadone.
- Patients are forewarned that this program will carefully regulate any other medications the patient is permitted to take during the course of treatment.

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Possible side effects of Methadone:

Initially, patients may find that they experience a few minor side effects from methadone. These may include:

- Lightheadedness
- Dizziness
- Sleepiness
- Upset stomach

For the above listed side effects, lying down for a while or minimizing physical activity often helps. An overwhelming number of patients are able to tolerate any initial discomfort, as the side effects are usually temporary. The only common exceptions are constipation and excessive perspiration, which may last longer. Patients are encouraged to address any concerns about any side effects to the Medical Director, Program Director, Nurses or their Counselor.