



AOTS 14. Methadone and medication interactions

There are a number of medications that can cause a variety of unexpected, unwanted or potentially dangerous outcomes when taken with methadone. E.g. using methadone with any other drug that depresses the central nervous system (alcohol, benzos, other opioids, GHB, and medications with sedative side effects -some antidepressants, antipsychotics and antihistamines) can be very dangerous and sometimes fatal. Ask your doctor or pharmacist before using any other medicine including over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal products.

Some medications cause the liver to **metabolise methadone more quickly** leading to a **decrease in the methadone level** in the blood. People then may experience withdrawal symptoms.

Medications known to cause a **significant drop in methadone levels** are:

- anti-epileptics eg. phenytoin (Dilantin™) and carbamazepine (Tegretol™) which is also used as a mood stabilizer
- rifampicin (Rifadin™, Rifinah™) used to treat tuberculosis and some other infections
- barbiturates though they are rarely used now

Medications that **might cause a drop in the methadone level** are:

- antiretroviral medications used to treat HIV
- spironolactone (Spirotone™) used to help get rid of fluid especially in those with liver disease
- St John's Wort which is a herbal product
- urinary acidifiers e.g. high doses of vitamin C

Some medications can **slow the metabolism of methadone** leading to an **increased methadone level** which can cause sedation/intoxication.

Medications that **might cause an increase in methadone levels** are:

- macrolide group of antibiotics eg. erythromycin (E-Mycin™, ERA™), clarithromycin (Klacid™, Klamycin™), azithromycin (Arrow-Azithromycin™), roxithromycin (Arrow-Roxithromycin™)
- the antibiotic ciprofloxacin (Ciproxin™, Cipflox™)
- anti-depressants eg. fluoxetine (Prozac™, Fluox™), paroxetine (Aropax™, Loxamine™), citalopram (Cipramil™, Celapram™), sertraline (Zoloft™), venlafaxine (Efexor™)
- moclobemide (Aurorix™) which is primarily used to treat depression and anxiety
- omeprazole (Losec™)
- diazepam (Propam™)
- cimetidine (Duomet™, Cytine™) which inhibits stomach acid production
- verapamil (Isoptin™, Verpamil™)
- urinary alkalinisers (Citrascent™, Ural™)

Unpredictable effects on methadone levels may be caused by:

- interferon
- benzodiazepines eg. alprazolam (Xanax™), clonazepam (Rivotril™, Paxam™), lorazepam (Ativan™, Lorzem™), midazolam (Hypnovel™), nitrazepam (Nitrados™), oxazepam (Ox-Pam™), temazepam (Euhypnos™, Normison™), triazolam (Halcion™, Hypam™)
- dextromethorphan which is present in many cough mixtures
- monoamine oxidase inhibitors including phenelzine (Nardil™) and tranylcypromine (Parnate™) used for certain types of depression
- nifedipine eg. Adalat™, Nyefax™, Adefin™ which are heart/blood pressure medications
- tricyclic anti-depressants eg. amitriptyline (Amitrip™), clomipramine (Clopress™), dothiepin (Dopress™), doxepin (Anten™), imipramine (Tofranil™), nortriptyline (Norpress™), trimipramine (Tripress™, Surmontil™)

Heart health

Methadone can cause changes in the electrical conduction system of some people's hearts: the heart beat can be too fast or too slow and may irregular. This is called 'arrhythmia' and methadone can contribute to the development of a serious arrhythmia for people susceptible to this problem.

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For more info see *OST and You p.35*

Some drugs generally accepted **to increase** this risk are:

amiodarone	Aratac™, Cordarone X™	for heart arrhythmias
chlorpromazine	Largactil™	used for psychosis or anxiety
cisapride	Prepulsid™	used in heart burn/GI stimulant
clarithromycin	Clarac™, Klacid™	an antibiotic
disopyramide	Rythmodan™	for heart arrhythmia
domperidone	Motilium™	for heartburn, nausea and vomiting
droperidol	Droleptan™	used as a tranquiliser and to treat vomiting
erythromycin	E-Mycin™ ERA™	a commonly used antibiotic
haloperidol	Serenace™	used to treat psychosis/confusion/severe vomiting
moxifloxacin	Avelox™	an antibiotic
pentamidine	Pentacarinat™	a special antibiotic
procainamide	Pronestyl™	for heart arrhythmias
sotalol	Sotacor™, Sotalol™	for heart arrhythmias

Some drugs that are **suspected** to or **may possibly increase** this risk are:

Tricyclic antidepressants and SSRIs	including Escitalopram (Loxalate™)	
The newer antidepressants	maprotiline (Ludiomil™), venlafaxine (Efexor™) and sertraline (Zoloft™)	
Newer anti-psychotics	risperidone (Risperidal™), quetiapine (Seroquel™, Quetapel™), ziprasidone (Zeldox™), clozapine (Clopine™, Clozaril™)	
Amantadine	Symmetrel™	for Parkinson's disease
Adenosine	Adenocor™ and flecainamide (Tambocor™)	for heart arrhythmias
Azithromycin	Arrow-Azithromycin™	an antibiotic
Famotidine	Famox™	for peptic ulcers
Foscarnet	Foscavir™	an antiviral drug used to treat HIV
Indapamide	Napamide™, Natrilix™	a diuretic used to treat high blood pressure
Isradipine	(Dynacirc™)	for high blood pressure
Lithium	Lithicarb™, Priadel™	
Naratriptan	Naramig™	used to treat migraine headaches
Octreotide	Sandostatin™	used to treat hormone producing tumours
Ondansetron	Zofran™	used to treat nausea and vomiting
Oxytocin	Syntocinon™ and Syntometrine™	for labour stimulation
Propafenone	Rytmonorm™	used to treat heart arrhythmia
Rizatriptan	Maxalt™	for migraines
Roxithromycin	Arrow-Roxithromycin™	an antibiotic
Salmeterol	Serevent™, Seretide™	a long-acting inhaler for asthma
Sumatriptan	Imigran™	for migraines
Tacrolimus	Prograf™	immunosuppressant used after organ transplant
Tamoxifen	Genox™	used to treat breast and endometrial cancer
Voriconazole	Vfend™	an anti-fungal agent

NB. Trade names (those with a 'TM' beside them) can change.

If you need more information talk to your doctor or community pharmacist.

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