

METHADONE

Street Names

Green, Juice, Meth, Linctus, Physeptone.

Description

Usually available as a green liquid (sometimes it can be an orange or yellow liquid), also available in ampoules and tablet forms.

Routes of Use

Liquids and tablets should be swallowed. Ampoules are injected.

History

Methadone Hydrochloride is an opioid (a synthetic opiate) that was originally synthesised by the German pharmaceutical company Axis during the Second World War. But was never brought into commercial production at all during the war. It was first marketed as 'Dolophine', some say to honour Adolph Hitler but more likely as a combination of the Latin word dolor (pain) and the French fin (end). It was used as an analgesic and at first doctors thought methadone would be a revolutionary new painkiller, but by the 1950s it was hardly being used at all, although it is still occasionally used for pain relief. In 1964 American doctors Marie Nyswander and Vincent Dole were looking for drugs that could help heroin users and found it helped their patients stop using heroin and that tolerance was slow to develop – thus methadone maintenance treatment was born.

Effects People Seek

Methadone is a chemical that has been manufactured to mimic many of the actions of opiates, and as with all opiates it has a wide range of effects on the mind and body. So when someone says, "methadone makes you sick/tired/itchy" etc., what they mean is that's how it effects them. Methadone is a longer-acting drug than heroin and is usually taken once a day without the user experiencing withdrawal symptoms. When it is prescribed it is not supposed to give a buzz, or get someone high, it dose though create a sense of well being and absence of stress. If it is taken orally as a mixture or linctus it takes around thirty minutes before the effects are felt.

Other Effects

Methadone causes no physical damage to the major organs of the body. But can cause drowsiness, constipation, and dryness of the eyes, nose and mouth, a reduction of blood pressure, sweating, itching and a craving for sweet foods.

Dependence and Tolerance

One of the reasons why methadone is prescribed is that tolerance builds up very slowly. There is an often repeated myth that methadone is 'much more addictive than heroin'. Although the physical withdrawals from methadone may last longer than those from heroin, overall there isn't much difference between them.

The Law

Methadone is a controlled under the misuse of drugs act 1971 as a schedule 2 drug, that is a substance considered to have medical therapeutic use, and legal to possess only if prescribed by a doctor, and then only if taken in accordance with the doctors instructions. Otherwise methadone is a class A drug.