

# ALBERTA WIDE, VIRTUAL OPIOID DEPENDENCY PROGRAM (VODP)

7 DAYS PER WEEK: **8AM-8PM** EMERGENCY PHYSICIAN AFTER  
HOURS ACCESS (PHARMACY OR CLIENT CALLS): 403-783-7770

TOLL FREE:1-844-383-7688

FAX:403-783-7610

## CLINIC INFORMATION:



# METHADONE

for the treatment of  
opioid use disorder



Date: 03/18/2026



## WHO IS METHADONE FOR?

Methadone is a long-acting medication that doctors prescribe to individuals who are seeking help for their opioid use, which includes drugs like fentanyl, morphine, and hydromorphone. It helps individuals stop using opioids and also alleviates the uncomfortable physical symptoms that occur when they stop taking opioids after long-term use. Additionally, methadone helps to reduce the strong urge to use opioids again.

## WHEN DO DOCTORS RECOMMEND METHADONE?

Sometimes, buprenorphine formulations, also known as Suboxone® or Sublocade®, might not be effective enough to ease someone's withdrawal symptoms, cravings, and/or pain.

## HOW IS METHADONE TAKEN?

Methadone is usually dispensed as a liquid and is often mixed with juice to improve taste and prevent diversion. Methadone can be effective for up to 36 hours. However, it is recommended that individuals take methadone once daily, as factors such as weight, height, and drug use history can influence how long the medication remains effective.

## HOW SOON CAN DOSES INCREASE?

Methadone is started at a low dose and then gradually increased. This gradual process allows for the assessment of side effects and tolerance. It may take a few weeks to reach a dose that effectively alleviates withdrawal symptoms.



## WHAT HAPPENS IF I MISS A DOSE?

Like other opioids, tolerance to methadone decreases if it is not taken daily. Missing several doses reduces tolerance, requiring a lower dose to avoid a poisoning.

If you stop taking methadone, withdrawal symptoms will develop.

## ARE THERE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH METHADONE?

There is a risk of methadone poisoning, especially at the beginning of treatment or if methadone is used with alcohol or other sedating drugs.

You should not share your methadone dose with anyone else. Your methadone dose is specific to you and can cause a poisoning if someone else takes it.

## SIDE EFFECTS OF METHADONE

When someone takes methadone, it can do a lot of different things. It can take away pain, and make a person feel sad or happy. Sometimes, it can make someone feel very sleepy or make it hard for them to breathe.

Methadone can slow down the movement inside a person's stomach and intestines, causing constipation and stomach upset. It can even affect the way the heart beats, sometimes leading to a longer QT interval, which is part of the heart's electrical cycle. This could cause a serious heart issue known as torsade de pointes. Taking methadone may also make the pupils of your eyes get smaller and can cause itching and redness because it releases a chemical called histamine. If someone takes methadone for a long time, their body might start to rely on it.