



Question: How do you convert methadone from an oral dose to an equivalent subcutaneous dose?

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Summary:

- For patients with palliative care needs, methadone should only be prescribed under the supervision of a specialist palliative care team.
- To convert from oral to subcutaneous methadone two methods are suggested, the oral dose can be divided by 2 to give the subcutaneous dose (*if overdosing is a concern this is the safest option*) or the same dose can be used. Please read the information below for full details.

Example: If a patient is taking methadone 10mg orally, using the conversions outlined, the equivalent subcutaneous dose is either 5mg or 10mg.

Information:

The oral bioavailability of methadone varies from 36-100%^{1,2} making an exact oral (PO): subcutaneous(SC) equi-analgesic equivalence ratio difficult to determine.³ A conversion ratio of 2:1 for PO:SC is widely suggested.^{1,3,4,5} A ratio of 2:1 for PO:SC means that the oral dose is divided by 2 to give the subcutaneous dose.

The Syringe Driver textbook advises that when using this conversion ratio there should be provision for prompt dose review.³ *The Palliative Care Formulary* recommends that for some patients, particularly those receiving a small dose of methadone (<80mg/24h), a 1:1 conversion ratio may be more appropriate and subsequent upwards dose titration

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may be required.⁵ A 1:1 conversion ratio means that no dose change is required for switching from oral to subcutaneous dosing.

The clinical condition of the patient should be taken into consideration when deciding which conversion ratio to use. The patient should be monitored very carefully during the conversion period. The ratios outlined above should only be used by practitioners with experience of their use.

References

- 1) Monograph Methadone. American Hospital Formulary Services (AHFS). Available from www.medicinescomplete.com. Accessed on the 11/04/2017.
- 2) Monograph Methadone. Micromedex. Available from www.micromedexsolutions.com. Accessed on the 11/04/2017.
- 3) Dickman A, Schneider J. The Syringe Driver, continuous subcutaneous infusions in palliative care. 4th Edition. Oxford. Page 149.
- 4) Monograph Methadone. Martindale: The complete drug reference. Available from www.medicinescomplete.com. Accessed on the 11/04/2017.
- 5) Monograph Methadone. Palliative Care Formulary. Available from www.palliativedrugs.com. Accessed on the 11/04/2017.