



Telling Others about MMT

Personal honesty is essential for recovery from addiction. However, when it comes to telling other people about your participation in methadone maintenance treatment (MMT), who you tell, when, and what you tell them can make a big difference in your life.

Telling others is a decision that you should carefully consider, and this brochure provides some helpful suggestions.

Will others understand?

Most people do not understand what addiction and addiction treatment are all about. Worse yet, many people have negative feelings about individuals who become addicted to drugs – addicts are stigmatized, even when they are in treatment.

This is especially so when it comes to MMT. Some people falsely believe that taking methadone is just substituting one addiction for another. Or that methadone is just as bad as heroin.

So, when you tell anyone about your participation in MMT, you must also be prepared to educate them. That way, they can be more supportive of your new life in recovery.

What should others know?

Opioid addiction is an illness and methadone is an opioid prescription medicine to treat it. Methadone has been used this way for more than 35 years and has helped millions of recovering addicts.

People need to understand that methadone does not make you “high” and you can function perfectly well while taking it. They also need to know that, just like medications for diabetes or heart problems, methadone often must be taken every day for a lifetime.

Focus on how MMT has allowed you to live a better life. Avoid discussing how horrible things were

in the past – those close to you already know about it; others do not need to know.

Should family & friends be told?

In most cases, you will want to tell close loved ones – such as a spouse or companion, older children, parents. These are people who have worried about your past drug addiction and will want to know about your methadone treatment so they can encourage you.

Others might be told on an “as-needed” basis. Young children, relatives you see only occasionally, or close friends may ask questions about your new and better life – answer them truthfully.

Past friends who are still abusing drugs might be jealous of your success or miss your companionship as a fellow addict. Generally, they would not be very supportive and it is best to avoid these people when possible.

What about people at work?

For certain jobs, drug testing is required. Or an employment application may ask if you are taking prescribed medicines. Honesty is your best policy. If you fail to provide complete application information or neglect to mention before drug testing that you could test positive for opioids, it would raise concerns about your trustworthiness.

However, your participation in MMT cannot be used against you. Laws, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, protect persons in treatment for addiction from job discrimination. And certain “reasonable accommodations” must be made, such as a work schedule allowing clinic attendance.

In most cases, there is no reason for co-workers to know that you are in MMT. If the subject comes up, and you decide to tell them, keep in mind that they may not understand and might view you differently from that time onward.

Do health care providers need to know?

It is absolutely necessary that you tell your doctors, dentists, nurses, and other medical

professionals that you are taking methadone. For one thing, you may have special needs when it comes to treatment for pain. Most important, certain prescribed medications could interact with your methadone, blocking the effects of methadone or the other medicines, and those drugs need to be avoided.

*W*hat else can you do?

Sometimes, others may not react as you expect when you tell them about your methadone program. However, there is help available to you.

- **Gather pamphlets, fact sheets, and other information to help you educate people about MMT.**
- **Ask staff at your clinic for help in explaining to others what MMT is all about.**
- **If there are conflicts with family, friends, or others over your participation in MMT, discuss these problems with clinic staff.**
- **If you are concerned about being discriminated against in employment or housing, ask the clinic staff about available assistance.**
- **If any health care providers are uncertain about treating you, refer them to the clinic medical staff for more information.**

Remember, how you tell others about your recovery in MMT is as important as who you tell. An attitude of honesty, openness, and humility will gain much more support for your addiction recovery efforts.

For further information on addiction and recovery issues, visit the *Addiction Treatment Forum* website at www.atforum.com.

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