

Patient Information

Steroid Therapy

Eye Unit

Do I have to be on steroids?

Your doctor has decided that a course of steroids is necessary to treat your condition by suppressing inflammation. In some eye conditions they may prevent serious visual impairment or blindness.

What are steroids?

They reduce the activity of your body's immune system and their action is anti-inflammatory. You will be prescribed Prednisolone tablets which come in different strengths denoted by the colour.

When do I take them?

You should take them with or after food to avoid indigestion. If the tablets have a hard (enteric) coating, they should be swallowed whole.

What dose should I take?

The dosage will start off very high until inflammation is controlled then slowly reduced. It is important that you do not stop them abruptly.

You will be given a Steroid Card in which your current dose will be written. Always carry this with you and show it to any doctor, dentist or nurse who is treating you.

What are the possible side effects of long term steroids?

All drugs can cause side effects, you may not develop any. Some that can occur are:

- Increased appetite, weight gain and fluid retention
- Thinning of your bones (osteoporosis)
- Rounding of your face
- Raised blood pressure (hypertension)
- Indigestion (dyspepsia) – important for doctor to know if you have had an ulcer

- Diabetes – if you already have this your treatment may need reviewing
- Thinning of the skin leading to easy bruising and delayed wound healing
- Mood changes
- Cataracts can occasionally occur after steroid treatment
- Glaucoma can sometimes be made worse

Also, taking steroids can make you more likely to develop infections. If this happens or if you have a fever you should see your GP.

Your doctor will need to know if you have epilepsy or if you have had tuberculosis. If you have not had chicken pox or shingles and you come into contact with someone who has them you should inform your GP.

Virtually all side effects can be minimised by a combination of exercise and good diet. Ideally you should aim for 30 minutes of weight bearing exercise a day, such as walking (or running!) You also need 1.5mg of calcium each day.

What monitoring will I need?

Your doctor will check your general condition from time to time, which may include your weight, blood pressure, urine.

Can I take other medicines while on steroids?

Most medication can be taken safely with Prednisolone, but some drugs can interact so you must tell your doctor what you already take and if you start anything new.

Can I have immunisation?

If you require vaccinations it is important to check with your GP. It is advisable for you to have flu vaccine but polio and rubella should be avoided.

Is it safe during pregnancy?

Prednisolone tablets or steroid eye drops may be taken in pregnancy but discuss with your doctor.

May I drink alcohol?

Alcohol and Prednisolone can upset the stomach so it is best to keep alcohol to a minimum. It is also advisable to stop or reduce smoking.

Remember:

- **Always carry your Steroid Card**
- **Never stop your steroids abruptly**
- **Any concerns – discuss with your doctor**