

Taking prednisolone steroid tablets for uveitis eye inflammation

Department of Ophthalmology

Information for Patients

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What is prednisolone?

Prednisolone is the most often prescribed steroid tablet. Prednisolone is available as either a tablet or in a special form, called “enteric coated” which is better to protect the stomach.

Steroids can help with several different types of medical conditions. They are very effective against swelling and inflammation, however, they only suppress the disease and do not cure it.

Why have I been given prednisolone?

You have been given this drug to help with inflammation in the eye (uveitis). It is not a pain reliever and usually works rapidly. It can improve some symptoms over a longer period of time.

When do I take it?

Prednisolone is usually taken once a day. It is best for you to take the dose in the morning, with or just after food. Sometimes it is prescribed so that you take it every second (alternate) day .

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What dose do I take?

Your doctor will advise you about the dose. This will depend on a number of factors such as why prednisolone is being used, and on your body weight. Your doctor may start you on a high dose and then reduce this over a number of weeks as your symptoms improve. If you have been taking steroids over a long time your doctor will reduce the dose very slowly.

You should not stop taking your steroid tablets or alter the dose unless advised by your doctor. It can be dangerous to stop steroids suddenly.

How long will it take to work?

Prednisolone works very quickly. You will usually notice a benefit within a few days.

Are there any side effects?

Possible side effects in the eye are:

- Increased risk of cataract
- Increased risk of raised eye pressure

The most common side effects in other areas are:

- weight gain
- sleep disturbance
- changes in mood
- muscle weakness
- thinning of the bones (osteoporosis)
- bruising easily
- indigestion, stomach pains
- stomach (gastric) ulcer
- stretch marks and thinning of the skin
- rise in blood sugar (increased risk of diabetes)

Is there anything I should look out for?

Taking prednisolone can make you more likely to develop infections. If this happens or if you have a fever you should see your doctor (GP or eye specialist). If you feel unwell or develop any new symptoms after starting prednisolone, it is important to

tell your doctor.

If you have not had chicken-pox but come into contact with someone who has chicken-pox or shingles, you should see your doctor immediately as you may need special treatment. If you develop chicken-pox or shingles you should see your doctor immediately.

You should have regular blood tests to monitor full blood count, blood sugar levels and liver function test with your doctor (GP) so the results can be monitored, if you are on long term steroids.

Reducing the risk of osteoporosis

Osteoporosis means thinning of the bones, which can make fractures more likely. To reduce the risk it is a good idea to follow the advice below. However, you should also ask your GP or specialist for advice in your particular case.

- Make sure you take calcium supplements (usually prescribed by hospital doctor) .Vitamin D supplements may also help.
- If possible, do at least 30 minutes of weight-bearing exercise (walking or running).
- Avoid smoking and reduce the amount of alcohol you drink.

Can I take other medicines along with steroid tablets?

Some other medicines interact with prednisolone and you should always tell any doctor treating you that you are taking prednisolone. You should not take over-the-counter medicines without talking to your doctor or pharmacist. However, many drugs can be safely taken with prednisolone.

Can I have immunisation injections while taking prednisolone?

You should avoid immunisation injections which involve any of the live vaccines such as polio, rubella (german measles) and yellow fever. Flu vaccines including COVID vaccines and pneumovax (a vaccination against a common bug which can cause pneumonia and other serious infections) are safe and recommended.

Do steroid tablets affect pregnancy?

If you are planning a family you should discuss this with your doctor before. If you

find you are pregnant and on steroids, do not stop them, but discuss things with your doctor. Never stop steroids abruptly. If you wish to breastfeed talk to your doctor before.

Can I drink alcohol while taking steroid tablets?

Alcohol and steroids can upset the stomach. It is advisable to avoid drinking alcohol or reduce alcohol intake to the minimum, while on steroids.

Carrying a steroid alert card

Patients on a prednisolone dose of more than 5mg, or equivalent (ask your doctor) for more than 3 weeks in any form, should carry a steroid alert card as required by NHS England. It means other health care staff know you are taking steroid medication should you need emergency treatment. The alert card is available from pharmacies or ask your doctor.

Who should I contact if I have any concerns?

If you think you may have any problems with your eyes contact the Eye Casualty Department on 0116 258 6273 or go to Eye Casualty located in the Windsor Eye Clinic, Level 1, Windsor Building, Leicester Royal Infirmary.

Opening times: Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm

Saturday & Sunday, 8.30am to 12.30pm

If your problem happens outside of these hours and you feel it is urgent, please go to the main Adult Emergency Department at Leicester Royal Infirmary.

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