

## Patient information

# Prednisolone

## St Paul's Eye Department - Royal Liverpool Hospital

Steroids may be given in different ways. They have an anti-inflammatory effect and are used to treat some diseases where your immune system is reacting against your own body (auto-immune diseases) and chronic inflammation, as in uveitis.

### **Why do I need to take Prednisolone?**

Prednisolone is the most commonly prescribed steroid tablet for auto-immune and inflammatory diseases that affect the eyes. It is very effective at suppressing inflammation and improving symptoms but will not cure the disease. It is used to bring the disease under control. Often other drugs will be used as well to treat your inflammation.

### **Are any precautions necessary before starting Prednisolone?**

Before starting treatment with Prednisolone your doctor will need to know your medical history. It will be necessary to check your blood pressure and test your urine before starting oral steroids.

Your blood pressure, blood sugar and weight will be checked regularly whilst you are taking Prednisolone.

### **When do I take Prednisolone?**

Prednisolone is usually taken once a day and you should take it with food as it may cause indigestion.

Prednisolone is available as a plain tablet or in a special form called 'enteric-coated'. Your doctor may prescribe enteric-coated tablets if you have indigestion.

Your doctor or pharmacist will give you a steroid card to carry with you at all times. It is important that the medical team know that you are on steroids if you have an accident or become unwell, as you may need to take a higher dosage.

### **What dose of Prednisolone do I take?**

The doctor treating you will decide the dose of Prednisolone. This will depend on why it is being prescribed as well as other factors such as other medications and your body weight.

Usually you will be started on a high dose that is gradually reduced as your symptoms improve and/or your disease becomes better controlled. If you have been on steroids for a long time then your doctor will slowly reduce the dose.

**You should not stop taking your steroid tablets or adjust the dose unless advised by a doctor. Stopping steroids suddenly can be dangerous.**

### **How long does Prednisolone take to work?**

Prednisolone usually works very quickly. Most people notice a benefit within a few days.

### **What are the possible side effects of oral steroids?**

Side effects are more likely if you have been on high doses of steroids for long periods of time. Your doctor will take this into account and will keep you on the lowest possible dose that controls your inflammation.

Because steroids are often needed to control the disease over long periods of time, your doctor will carefully weigh up the risks and benefits of you continuing to take them. If you are on low doses of steroids you may never experience any problems.

The most common side effects are weight gain, a round face, bruising, stretch marks and thinning of the bones skin. With prolonged or high dosage weakening of the bones (osteoporosis), making you prone to bone fractures and muscle weakness can occur.

Some people notice marked mood changes such as euphoria and depression. In your eyes cataracts may develop and Prednisolone may make glaucoma worse. The blood sugar may rise when taking Prednisolone and if you have diabetes your treatment may need to be adjusted to take this into account. Similarly, high doses of Prednisolone may cause a rise in blood pressure.

There is an increased risk of developing infections when taking Prednisolone. If you feel unwell or develop a fever you should tell your doctor immediately.

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

In children steroids may suppress growth.

### **Can I take other medication at the same time as steroids?**

Some medicines may interact with your oral steroids, but many can be safely taken at the same time as Prednisolone. You should tell your doctor which medications you are taking. Do not take 'over the counter' preparations without discussing them with your doctor.

### **Can I have immunisations whilst on steroid tablets?**

You should avoid 'live' vaccines such as Polio, Yellow Fever, Varicella- Zoster (Chicken Pox) or Rubella (German Measles). Flu vaccines are safe and are recommended.

### **Can I take Prednisolone during pregnancy?**

Although it is best not to take Prednisolone if you are pregnant, it is safer than some other drugs. If you are planning a family you should discuss this with your doctor beforehand.

If you discover that you are pregnant and are taking oral steroids, do not stop them, but discuss things with your doctor.

### **Never stop oral steroids abruptly.**

## **Can I drink alcohol while I am on Prednisolone?**

Both alcohol and steroids can upset the stomach so you are best to avoid alcohol.

### **Remember**

- Always carry a steroid card.
- Never stop steroids abruptly or alter your dose without discussing with your doctor first.

### **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated

### **Further information**

**St Paul's Eye Unit**

**Tel: 0151 706 2000**

**Bleep 724**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2000 Bleep 724**

**Ask for Uveitis Nurse**

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