

Prednisolone

Information for
Parents, Carers & Young People



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Introduction

This leaflet contains information about prednisolone in the treatment of juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), systemic lupus erythematosus, juvenile dermatomyositis, systemic vasculitis and other autoimmune conditions. It will be useful alongside discussion with the Paediatric Rheumatology team. It tells you about how this medicine works, how it should be given and whether there are any side effects.

You should read this alongside any information provided by the manufacturers in the medicine package.

Why have I been given this leaflet?

The information in this leaflet will help you to remember what your doctor has told you about this medicine.

What is prednisolone and how does it work?

Prednisolone is a corticosteroid, which is similar to a natural hormone produced by the body called cortisone. Corticosteroids reduce inflammation, so reducing swelling and help to slow down the effects of autoimmune diseases. They also modulate the autoimmune process. A big advantage of corticosteroids is that they start to produce benefit soon, usually within a few days, but sometimes it can take longer.

How should I give this medicine?

Prednisolone is available in a soluble tablet or a solid, white tablet. Your child/you will usually be started on a fairly high dose of prednisolone.

At first it is given daily, but as the dose is reduced it may be changed to alternate days as this helps to reduce the side effects and allows your/the child's own adrenal glands to start making more of the body's own steroid. The adrenal glands help the body respond appropriately to stress.

When the symptoms come under control the dose will gradually be reduced, which usually reduces any side effects. The doctor will advise you on the dose.

Prednisolone should be given in the morning, after breakfast to reduce interference with sleep. Full instructions will be written on the Pharmacy label on the medicine bottle. Please follow these instructions carefully. You should receive a steroid card from the Pharmacy. Please carry this with you and record the date the prednisolone was started and the current dose.

If you forget to give a dose, give it as soon as you remember. If it is nearly time for the next dose, miss out the one that you forgot.

If you/your child vomits within 15 minutes of giving a dose, repeat the dose.

You/Your child may be able to stop taking the prednisolone after some weeks or months. However, some people have to remain on a low dose for a longer period of time. Keep giving the medicine until your doctor tells you to stop. **When prednisolone has been given for more than a few weeks it must not be stopped suddenly, even when the child/young person taking the prednisolone is unwell including with an infection**

Some important things to remember about prednisolone

Should you/your child become unwell, the prednisolone dose may need to be increased. Always remind doctors and dentists treating you/your child about the prednisolone treatment, particularly if you/your child needs surgery or is in a major accident.

Prednisolone suppresses the immune system and increases the risk of developing a severe case of chickenpox or, measles or other infections. Unless you know that they are immune if a child/young person is in contact with chickenpox or measles while on prednisolone, contact your doctor the next working day.

Caution may be required when you/your child requires a vaccine. Your doctor will be aware of this caution and consider each vaccine individually for you/your child.

Please arrange an influenza vaccine every winter, due to the immunosuppressive nature of this medicine.

You may also need a pneumococcal vaccine.

When should prednisolone be avoided?

There are people with certain medical conditions who should not take prednisolone, or who should take it with extra care.

The manufacturers leaflet will explain this in more detail. Please tell your doctor if your child has any of the conditions listed.

Are there any side effects?

All medicines can cause side effects. The leaflet provided by the manufacturer for this medicine contains a comprehensive list of the effects reported.

Prednisolone may cause indigestion. This is less likely to happen if the tablets are taken after food or milk. If this is the case a regular antacid medication can be helpful.

The appetite of most children increases while taking prednisolone. They usually put on extra weight and retain fluid, especially around the face and tummy. These changes are reversible when the dose is reduced and can be reduced by regular exercise where possible and following a healthy diet. Prednisolone can disturb sleep and can affect mood.

If prednisolone is taken for a long period of time, the bones may become thin and grow more slowly than expected. Your/your child's growth and bone development will be monitored in the clinic. Long-term prednisolone also increases risk of infection and of developing diabetes mellitus.

Prednisolone has many other possible side effects.

If you are concerned by any changes after it has started, please discuss with the Paediatric Rheumatology team.

Does prednisolone affect any other medicines?

Prednisolone can be taken safely with most other medicines. However, you should tell your doctor or pharmacist about all the other medicines you/your child takes. This includes any medicines prescribed by another doctor as well as medicines bought from a pharmacy or supermarket and any herbal remedies.

If you/your child is prescribed a new medicine (including vaccinations), or you want to buy a medicine (for your child) from a pharmacy, it is important that you tell the doctor or pharmacist about all the medicines that you/they take, including prednisolone. You should also tell your/your child's dentist.

Where should I store this medicine at home?

Prednisolone should be stored in a cool, dry place, away from direct sunlight.

It is important that all medicines are stored out of reach of children.

Where do I get a further supply?

Further supplies are available from your GP. Ask your GP to write a prescription for your child when you have a 1-2 weeks supply left and take the prescription to your local pharmacy.

How can I find out more?

This leaflet has been written to provide general information about the use of prednisolone in children. If you have any more specific questions or concerns, please speak to one of the following:

Children's Rheumatology Nursing Team	0113 392 0683
Paediatric Rheumatology Secretary	0113 392 0666



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