

Corticosteroids

Names for this medication	How to take this medication
Prednisone	By mouth as tablets
Prednisone Prednisolone (Pediapred®)	By mouth as liquid
Dexamethasone Hydrocortisone Methylprednisone	Intravenous (IV)

How this medication works

Corticosteroids are a group of medications that are similar to the body's natural stress hormone, cortisol. Corticosteroids work on the immune system to decrease inflammation. Usually, corticosteroids start to work within 48 hours.

How to take this medication

Corticosteroids may be taken either once, twice or three times a day. If this medication is prescribed once a day, it is best to take it in the morning.

If corticosteroids are being taken by mouth, they should be taken after a snack or meal to prevent stomach upset.

Do not stop this medication suddenly unless your rheumatologist has suggested that you do this. You may become very sick if you stop taking corticosteroids suddenly. The dose of this medication usually needs to be decreased gradually before stopping it.

Please take the dose of this medication that is recommended by your rheumatologist. Do not take a smaller or larger amount of medication. If you are unsure of the correct dose, please check with your doctor.

While taking this medication you may notice

Some possible side effects include:

- Increased appetite, weight gain
- Nausea, stomach upset or pain, indigestion
- Restlessness, trouble sleeping, irritability, mood changes
- Bone softening and collapse, also known as avascular necrosis
- Puffy face, swollen ankles and/or feet
- Delayed growth
- Acne
- Stretch marks, bruising
- More frequent infections
- Serious infections
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar
- Cataracts
- Low bone density, also known as osteoporosis

These side effects may occur with higher doses of steroids or when steroids are taken for a long period of time.

What to remember while taking this medication

Corticosteroids may make it harder for the body to fight infections. Call your doctor if you have a fever, if you think you have an infection, or if you are given antibiotics to treat an infection. Do not stop taking this medication if you have an infection.

If you develop a rash that looks like chicken pox, please call your doctor right away.

If you will be taking corticosteroids for longer than one month, your doctor will recommend that you take vitamin D and that you make sure you get enough calcium in your diet. Vitamin D and calcium help keep your bones healthy and strong.

Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before starting a new medication.