

## PATIENT INFORMATION

# Oral Steroids: Prednisone and Methylprednisolone

### Why are these medications prescribed?

Oral steroids are potent drugs that are often used to relieve inflammation in various parts of the body. They are prescribed to treat allergies, asthma, arthritis, eye inflammation, skin conditions, and other conditions as determined by your health care provider. Steroids can also be helpful in relieving inflammation in chronic sinus disease.

### Dosing

Dosing of both prednisone and methylprednisolone is variable and depends on the underlying condition being treated, as well as your other health issues.

Two general principles guide dosing:

- Both medications are started at higher doses, with the dosage gradually tapered over days, weeks, or months.
- To reduce the risk of side effects and complications, please take the medication exactly as prescribed by your doctor and only for the specified length of time. These medications should never be stopped or started without the approval of a health care provider.

### Proper Use

- Take the medicine by mouth right after a full breakfast to reduce stomach upset.
- Do not take more or less than what is prescribed.
- Do not miss doses. If you do miss a dose, ask your health care provider what to do.

### Possible Side Effects

- Serious but rare side effects include difficulty breathing; closing of your throat; swelling of your lips, tongue, or face; rash; blurred vision; severe headache; joint pain; and weight gain of more than 5 pounds in a day or two. **If any of these side effects occur, call your health care provider right away.**
- Other more common side effects include insomnia, nausea, vomiting, upset stomach, increased appetite or thirst, mood changes, dizziness, fatigue, muscle weakness/joint pain, and problems with diabetes control. If any of these side effects occur, continue to take the medication but talk with your health care provider.
- Other side effects include cataract formation, bone loss, osteoporosis, glaucoma (increased pressures in the eyes), increased hair growth, acne, changes in behavior, and thinning of skin. These side effects are more likely when these medications are taken in large doses or for a long time.

### Recommendations While Taking Steroids

- If you have high blood pressure or diabetes, you should monitor your blood pressure or glucose levels very carefully with the aid of your primary doctor.
- If you experience indigestion or heartburn, it may be necessary to take special precautions to protect your stomach. Discuss this with your health care provider.
- Supplemental calcium and vitamin D (calcium 1200–1500 mg and Vitamin D (400–800 IU daily) are strongly recommended.

- Bone density and eye exams should be performed, as directed by your health care provider.

### **Keep All Medications Out of Reach of Children**

#### **Possible Drug Interactions**

Taking corticosteroids with other medications may increase or decrease the effects of the other medications. These combinations may cause harmful side effects. Some examples of medications that may interact with corticosteroids are aspirin and salicylates, barbiturates such as phenobarbital, seizure medications like phenytoin (Dilantin®), and rifampin. Tell your health care provider about all the medications you are taking.

§

This handout includes selected information only and may not include all side effects of this medicine or interactions with other medicines. Consult your health care provider or pharmacist for more information or if you have further questions.

#### **Medication Dos and Don'ts**

- Do not drink alcohol before or after taking this medicine.
- Do not take more than one dose at a time.
- Do not increase the dosage unless directed by your health care provider.
- Do not start taking any new medicine (including birth control pills) without first telling your health care provider or pharmacist.
- Do not keep this medicine in the bathroom because of the heat and moisture.
- Be sure that you tell all your health care providers who treat you about all medicines you are taking, including nonprescription products.