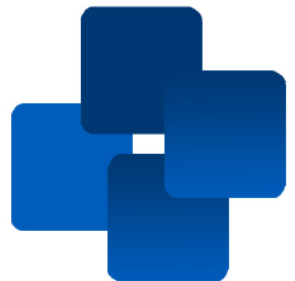


Patient Information

Prednisolone Therapy

Renal Department



Why have I been prescribed this medication ?

Prednisolone is a drug that can be used to treat a variety of medical conditions including autoimmune diseases, such as vasculitis, minimal change disease or membranous nephropathy. It is also used as an anti-rejection medicine after organ transplant to stop the body rejecting the transplant. The clinician that prescribes this medicine for you will tell you about your condition and why prednisolone is being prescribed.

How does it work?

Prednisolone belongs to a group of medicines called steroids which are immunosuppressants. It helps to reduce or suppress your body's own immune system. Your immune system helps to protect you against infections, however, sometimes it can overreact or react abnormally and cause illness. Prednisolone can be used to treat these conditions, often in combination with other medicines.

How long does it take to work?

Prednisolone works slowly and can take several weeks to take effect.

What dose do I take?

The dose of prednisolone depends on your weight and the medical condition being treated. Prednisolone is often started at a high dose and weaned down slowly over weeks or months.

How do I take it?

Prednisolone is available as 5mg and 1mg tablets.

- You should always take the medicines as directed by your doctor
- You should take the prednisolone with or immediately after food to help reduce indigestion and stomach ulcers
- The tablets are best taken first thing in the morning after breakfast
- You should not stop taking prednisolone suddenly, please speak to your doctor first who will inform you how to reduce the dose and when to stop taking it altogether

How long will I be taking it?

The length of time you will be taking prednisolone will depend on the condition being treated. Do not stop taking your medicine unless your doctor tells you to.

Does prednisolone interfere with my other medicines?

Prednisolone can interact with other medicines. You should tell your doctor which medicines you are taking before starting prednisolone.

- Medicines which interact with prednisolone include warfarin, erythromycin, oral contraceptive pill and phenytoin. Please let your doctor know if you take any of these medicines
- Always check with your doctor or pharmacist first before starting any new medication
- You should avoid 'live' vaccines but most travel vaccines and the 'flu jab are ok
- It is safe to drink alcohol in moderation while taking prednisolone but it may make nausea worse

Can prednisolone cause side effects?

All medicines can cause unwanted side effects which usually improve as your body gets used to the new medication.

During the early weeks you may notice:

- Indigestion, stomach ulcers
- Weight gain, increased appetite
- Mood changes - feeling very low or high
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes - your blood sugar should be checked whilst on a high dose

Side effects over the longer term:

- Thinning of the bones (osteoporosis)
- Thinning of the skin (can lead to easy bruising)
- Fractures

You are more likely to catch infections. Tell your doctor if you come into contact with chicken pox (even if you have had it before) whilst taking prednisolone and for 3 months after stopping.

Always carry your 'blue steroid' card with you to tell people that you take steroids so they are not stopped suddenly. If treatment is stopped too quickly it can lead to severe problems with your adrenal gland.

What happens if I forget to take a dose?

If you remember within 12 hours of your dose being due then take your dose as usual. If it is more than 12 hours since your dose was due, do not take the dose and take your next dose at the normal time.

Is it ok to have prednisolone during pregnancy and breastfeeding?

If you are planning to become pregnant while you are taking prednisolone, you should discuss this with your doctor. Current guidelines say that prednisolone can be taken when pregnant or breastfeeding. It is safe for men to continue taking prednisolone when trying for a baby.

Possible risks

You should tell your doctor or nurse specialist straight away if you develop any of the following after starting prednisolone:

- A sore throat, fever or any other signs of infection
- Any new symptoms that concern you

Tips to reduce your risk of infection

- Try to avoid close contact with people you know have an infection
- Wash your hands regularly and carry round a small bottle of antibacterial gel to use
- Keep your mouth clean by brushing your teeth regularly
- Make sure your food is stored and prepared properly
- Try to keep your house clean and hygienic, especially the kitchen, bathrooms and toilets
- Have your yearly 'flu vaccine

Always carry the red NHS Steroid Emergency Card with you which is a prompt for healthcare staff to identify appropriate patients and gives information on the emergency treatment to start if they are acutely unwell.

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