



Rocky Mountain Pediatric Pulmonology

4545 E. 9th Ave., Suite 504

Denver, CO 80220

Tel: 303-831-9853 Fax: 303-832-3533

Dr. Lee Rusakow

Dr. Margarita Guarin

Helping your child...with inspiration!

Oral Steroids

Cortisone is a hormone produced naturally by the body's adrenal glands. It can also be produced synthetically (elaborated in laboratories). Cortisone has been found to have a marked anti-inflammatory effect. Steroids produced by the outer (cortex) of the adrenal gland are called "corticosteroid". Cortisol or cortisone is a hormone that controls many important body functions. You could not live without cortisol.

Prednisone, prednisolone, hydrocortisone, methylprednisone and dexamethasone (Decadron) are medicines known as corticosteroids. Prednisone is the synthetic corticosteroid preparation most often used in the treatment of severe asthma. It comes in tablets of 1, 5, 10 and 20 milligrams (mg). These medicines are used to help reduce inflammation. They are generally safe **when taken under a doctor's supervision**.

Since Prednisone and Prednisolone are similar to hormones made by the body, the body's natural production of these hormones may be slowed down for a while by the use of prednisone. Therefore, it is important that any changes in the use or dose should be directed by your doctor. **Never stop taking prednisone or change the prescribed dosage without first talking to your doctor.** As the dose of prednisone is decreased, the body will slowly begin to make more natural hormones (chemical messengers secreted by a variety of glands) again.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

Some of the side effects of high doses of this medicine are:

- Increased appetite and weight gain
- Round or moon shaped face
- Increased body hair
- Acne
- Increase blood pressure
- Stomach irritation
- Mood changes
- Insomnia (inability to sleep)
- Slow healing of cuts and wounds
- Easy bruising of the skin
- Red or purple stretch marks on the skin

LONG TERM USE

If this medicine has been used for more than 2-3 weeks, it has probably had some effect on the adrenal glands in the body that naturally secrete hormones. This medicine does some of the work of the adrenal gland. If your child has been on steroids and if there is a major illness with or without fever, trauma, or a need for surgery, increased dose of steroid medicines may need to be given for a few days. Side effects that can be seen with long term use include:

- Osteoporosis (loss of bone strength)

- Ulcers
- Stomach inflammation
- Slowed growth
- Increased blood sugar
- Cataracts
- Muscle weakness
- Increased chance of infections

WHAT TO DO ABOUT SIDE EFFECTS

Most of these side effects are temporary and should go away after the medicine is stopped. Your doctor can usually prevent or reverse the long term side effects by reducing the dose or by having your child take prednisone every other day.

NUTRITION

- It is important to eat well balanced meals every day.
- Make sure your child's diet provides enough Calcium and Vitamin D
- You may want to limit the amount of salt your child uses while taking prednisone or prednisolone to avoid fluid retention
- Make sure your child exercise to maintain health bones and muscles.

REMEMBER

- Give exact dose of medicine that your doctor ordered.
- Stay with your child until he or she has swallowed the dose of medicine.

HOW TO GIVE THIS MEDICINE

- This medicine should be given with or immediately after meals.
- If your child takes prednisone only once a day or once every other day, it is best to give it in the morning with breakfast.
- If your child has trouble taking medicine, tell your doctor.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU FORGET TO GIVE A DOSE

If you forget to give a dose of this medicine, give it as soon as you remember. If it is almost time for the next dose, do not give the missed dose at all and do not double the next dose. Instead, go back to your regular dosing schedule. If you are unclear what to do please call your doctor.

WHAT IF DOSE IS VOMITED

If the medicine is vomited right after you give it, wait 10 to 20 minutes, and then give the same dose you gave one more time. If the vomiting continues, call the doctor.

SAFETY TIPS AND OTHER INFORMATION

- Take your steroids and other medications exactly as prescribed
- Contact your doctor if you develop high fevers with chills or shakes, severe pain in a joint or bone, persistent blurred vision or severe muscle weakness, or drastic mood or behavioral changes
- Do not stop giving this medicine or change the amount given without first talking with your child's doctor. Side effects are likely if this medicine is stopped suddenly after long term use.

- Your child should wear a medical identification bracelet such as “Medical Alert” or necklace that states “steroid dependent” so that if an emergency occurs, the doctor treating your child will know that she/he is taking this medicine.
- Check with your doctor before giving your child any other medicine or immunizations while she/he is taking prednisone or prednisolone.
- If blood tests are done while prednisone is in the child’s system, the medicine can change the results of these tests.