



Inflammatory Bowel Disease Patient Information

Prednisolone/steroid therapy

If your inflammatory bowel disease (Crohn's or Ulcerative colitis) is "flaring up" your doctor may decide to prescribe prednisolone also known as steroids.

What are steroids?

Steroids are natural substances produced by the adrenal gland. They are used for many reasons including reducing inflammation.

How do steroids work?

Large doses of steroids dampen the body's immune system and so reduce inflammation. They are very effective in treating flare ups of inflammatory bowel disease in short courses of 6-8 weeks. There is no evidence that they improve disease control if taken long term.

How and when do I take the tablets?

Steroid tablets should be taken altogether at breakfast time.

What are the side effects?

Short term: increased appetite, weight gain, high blood sugars, diabetes, high blood pressure, fluid retention, puffy face, difficulty in sleeping, mood swings, acne and a reduced ability to fight infections.

Long term: osteoporosis (thinning of the bones), thinning of the skin, increased risk of bruising, muscle weakness, dependency on steroids.

How do I avoid side effects?

In some patients it is possible to give steroids directly onto the lining of the bowel (as in suppositories, foam or liquid enemas). It is important to do this rather than take tablets wherever possible as it will reduce the side effects.

Can I have immunisations whilst on steroids?

Immunisation with "live" vaccines should be avoided but "inactive" vaccines are safe (such as the flu vaccine).

Can I drink alcohol whilst on steroids?

Yes, in moderation as per national guidelines.

Do I continue to take my usual medication?

Yes, if there is any doubt please ask your IBD nurse or Doctor.

Do steroids affect fertility or pregnancy?

Steroids do not affect fertility and can be safely taken in pregnancy. If you need them towards the end of your pregnancy it is important to inform your obstetrician.

Where can I obtain further information about steroids?

If you have any questions about steroids please ask your doctor or your IBD nurse specialist or your pharmacist.

What dose of Prednisolone should I take?

Start taking your prednisolone 5mg tablets:

40mg = x 8 tablets for 14 days

Then take 30mg = x 6 tablets for 7 days

Then take 25mg = x 5 tablets for 7 days

Then take 20mg = x 4 tablets for 7 days

Then take 15mg = x 3 tablets for 7 days

Then take 10mg = x 2 tablets for 7 days

Then take 5mg = x 1 tablet for 7 days.
Then stop.

Do not stop taking steroid tablets suddenly if you have been on them for a few weeks as you can get withdrawal problems. They must be reduced slowly.

All patients taking steroids by mouth must carry the steroid card given to you by the pharmacy. If you have a flare up of your Crohn's or Ulcerative Colitis when you are reducing your steroid tablets then please phone the helpline on **01582 718368**