

## **What Patients Need to Know About Prednisone**

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### **What is Prednisone and what does it treat?**

Prednisone is a member of the CORTICOSTEROID class of medications. You may here it called a “steroid”; however don’t confuse it with the “body building steroids”. Prednisone works to relieve inflammation in the body. It is used to treat conditions such as asthma, allergic reactions, skin rashes, inflammation of the eye, certain lung diseases, and some cancers such as leukemia and lymphoma. There are many other uses for prednisone, so don’t be alarmed if your condition or diagnosis is not listed.

### **How do I take prednisone?**

Prednisone should be taken by mouth. There are many different ways to take it. As with all medications, you should take it exactly how your doctor has prescribed it. Do NOT stop taking the medication without first checking with you doctor. You may have to gradually reduce the dose before stopping prednisone.

Prednisone may upset your stomach. To prevent this, it may be taken with food or a meal. If you forget to take a dose, and are taking prednisone once a day, take it as soon as you remember that same day. If you don’t remember until the next day, do NOT take double the dose. You should skip the missed dose and take your normal daily dose. If you have missed a dose and do not know what to do about it, contact you doctor or pharmacist.

### **Are there side effects to taking prednisone?**

YES, there are side effects to ALL medications. Certain side effects may go away as you body adapts to taking prednisone, while other side effects may be serious and even life threatening. It is important to remember that NOT all patients taking prednisone have these side effects. Your physician has prescribed prednisone because the benefit of taking it is greater than the risk of side effects.

Common side effects of prednisone include nausea & vomiting (may be taken with food to prevent this), gas, dizziness, headache, nervousness, menstrual irregularities, and trouble sleeping. If you are going to be taking prednisone for a long time, you body may adapt to these side effects over time.

Allergic reaction is a life threatening side effect, described as hives, itching, rash, trouble breathing, chest tightness, and swelling in you lips, throat, or tongue. This is an emergency and you should get emergency care immediately, or call 911. Serious side effects should be reported to you doctor and include: seizures, blood/black stool, chest pain, severe headaches, vision changes, confusion or changes in mood, sudden weight gain, acne, and signs of infection (sore throat, fever, painful urination, etc).

### **How will prednisone affect ongoing medical problems?**

Diabetics: Prednisone may lead to changes in blood sugar levels and therefore may require adjustments in the amount of insulin or oral diabetes medications that you need to take. Please discuss this with your doctor and let he/she know if you see a dramatic change in you blood sugar readings.

Since prednisone acts to reduce inflammation, you may get an infection more easily while taking it. While taking prednisone, try to avoid contact with people who have the flu, colds, and other infections, as much as possible. If you live with someone who has an infection, use good hygiene: wash your hands regularly, don’t drink from the same glass or eat from the same plate at those who are sick.

Please contact you doctor if you need surgery, or dental work. Also if you have not had the chicken pox (or chicken pox vaccine), the measles (or measles vaccine), and are exposed to someone with chicken pox, the measles, or tuberculosis, contact you doctor immediately.

**Does Prednisone interact with other medications?**

Yes, prednisone may interact with various prescription and over-the-counter medications, as well as some herbal/natural supplements. Before taking prednisone, tell your doctor about any herbal/natural supplements and prescription or over-the-counter medications that you are taking. If you want to take a new supplement or medication, talk to your doctor or pharmacist before doing so. By discussing this, you may prevent serious drug interactions from occurring.

**What else should I know about prednisone?**

You should store your prednisone at room temperature in a tight container that protects it from direct light, heat, and humidity. If you have young children or young children visit your home, keep prednisone and all other medications out of their reach. Should anyone accidentally ingest this or any other medication, contact poison control or call 911.

Resources:

1. Prednisone: Micromedex via the Ruth Lilly Medical Library:  
<http://www.medlib.iupui.edu/>
2. Hardman, Limbird, Molinoff, Ruddon, and Gilman. *Goodman & Gilman's: The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics*. McGraw-Hill, New York, New York: 1996. Pages: 1465-81.