

Corticosteroid (“steroid”) tablets

Example: Prednisolone tablets

Why has my child been given corticosteroids?

Corticosteroids or ‘steroids’ treat inflammation in the body. Inflammation can be caused by injury, infection, or allergy, or occur after surgery. In milder cases, steroids are given as eye drops. If the inflammation is more severe, then larger doses of steroids are given by mouth. A course of corticosteroids may be given for weeks or months.

What should I tell the pharmacist or doctor?

Tell the pharmacist and doctor if your child has high blood pressure, stomach or bowel problems, diabetes or any active infection.

What is a ‘steroid card’?

A blue ‘steroid card’ will be given to you by the pharmacist. The card has information about the dose of steroid your child is taking. The steroid card should remain with your child at all times and **must** be shown to any doctor, dentist, nurse or pharmacist who treats your child.

What about other medicines or vaccines?

Certain ‘live’ vaccines should not be given to children who are on or have recently finished taking corticosteroids. You should show your ‘steroid card’ to any doctor who is considering vaccinating your child.

What time of the day are corticosteroids taken?

Steroid tablets are usually taken once a day in the morning with breakfast or immediately after it. It is best to take steroids with food, as this reduces the chance of a tummy upset. Sometimes, another medicine will be given to reduce the chance of an upset stomach.

Some steroid tablets are soluble and can be dissolved in a glass of water before taking. Check with your pharmacist if your tablets are soluble.

How are corticosteroids stopped?

Quite often, the dose is gradually reduced over several weeks. It is important that your child does **not** suddenly stop taking the tablets unless you are told to do so by your doctor. For this reason, it is important to make sure that you have a supply of steroid tablets.

What are the main side effects?

Most children do not develop serious side effects from steroids. Common side effects include mild stomach upset, increased appetite, and weight gain. Some children might experience changes in their mood. These should disappear once the body adjusts to the medication.

Serious side effects can occasionally occur, including high blood pressure and temporary diabetes (high blood sugar). If given in high doses for long periods of time, corticosteroids might slow the growth of children.

Taking steroids can also increase the chance of infections, so it is important for your child to avoid contact with anyone who has any infectious disease such as chickenpox, shingles, measles or flu.

If your child develops severe stomach pain, vomits with blood or has black stools, or seems seriously unwell, contact your doctor or pharmacist immediately.

What should I do if I am concerned about side effects?

If you are concerned about the side effects of steroids or if your child suffers any symptoms which you think could be due to the steroids, you should speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

If your child feels unwell while you are reducing their steroids, you should see your doctor as soon as possible.

How do you store corticosteroids?

Steroid tablets can be stored at room temperature. Do not use medicines after the expiry date written on the packaging.

Need more information?

Please refer to the packaging and product leaflet for further information or contact the pharmacy department on: 020 7566 2362

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City Road, London EC1V 2PD

Ph: 020 7253 3411 www.moorfields.nhs.uk

Moorfields Direct telephone helpline: 020 7566 2345

Monday to Friday 09.00 to 16.30 for further information and advice.