

Prednisolone

Information for patients and carers from the Haematology Department

Why have I been prescribed Prednisolone?

Prednisolone belongs to a group of medicines called steroids (full name corticosteroids). Corticosteroids occur naturally in the body, and help to maintain health and wellbeing.

You have usually been prescribed Prednisolone because you either have immune thrombocytopenia (ITP), meaning your platelet count is low or you have a condition called autoimmune haemolytic anaemia (AIHA). As a result we need to increase your platelet count (ITP) or your red blood cells (AIHA).

Corticosteroids work by stopping your immune system from destroying your platelets or red blood cells, thereby reducing the level of antibodies in your blood stream. They can usually start working within a few days.

How do I take this medication?

We give this medication as a tablet. It comes in either 1mg or 5mg tablets. You will be started on a high dose which will then, over the next few weeks, be gradually reduced. These drugs usually begin to work within the first few days of taking them.

Once you are prescribed Prednisolone you will be given a **Steroid Treatment Card**, which includes important details about your treatment. You should carry this card at all times and show it to any doctor or nurse treating you.

Always take Prednisolone tablets exactly as your doctor has told you, especially if you are elderly. If you are not sure how to take your tablets, check with your doctor or pharmacist.

Swallow the tablets whole with a little water, as a single dose. Take them in the morning after breakfast, unless told otherwise by your doctor.



What are the possible side effects of Prednisolone?

In some cases, corticosteroids can cause serious mental health problems in both adults and children. They can affect about five in every 100 people taking Prednisolone and include the following.

- Feeling depressed, including thinking about suicide.
- Feeling high (mania) or moods that go up and down.
- Feeling anxious, having problems sleeping, difficulty in thinking, or being confused and losing your memory.
- Feeling, seeing, or hearing things that do not exist.
- Having strange and frightening thoughts.
- Changing how you act.
- Having feelings of being alone.

If you notice any of these problems, talk to your doctor straightaway.

Some people may have an allergic reaction to taking Prednisolone. These can include:

- any kind of skin rash or itching of the skin; or
- difficulty breathing or collapsing.

If you have an allergic reaction to Prednisolone see your doctor straightaway.

If you get any of the following side effects, see your doctor as soon as possible.

- Stomach and gut problems: ulcers in the throat, stomach ulcers (which may perforate or bleed), indigestion, feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting), a swollen stomach, having more of an appetite than usual, hiccups, and diarrhoea.
- Inflamed pancreas: this may cause severe pain in your back or stomach.
- Problems with salts in your blood, such as too much sodium or low potassium or calcium. You may also experience water retention.
- Heart and blood problems: high blood pressure, blood clots, problems with the muscles in your heart (if you have had a recent heart attack).
- Bone problems: thinning of the bones (osteoporosis) with an increased risk of fractures and bone disease.
- Recurring infections for example thrush and chickenpox, which get worse each time they happen.
- Skin problems: wounds that heal more slowly, bruising, and acne.
- Eye problems: increased pressure in your eye including glaucoma, eye disorders such as cataracts, eye infections, visual disturbances, loss of vision, and blurred vision.

- Hormone problems: irregular or missed periods, swelling of the face (called 'cushingoid' or 'moon' face). Prednisolone may affect your diabetes (if you have it) and you may notice you start needing higher doses of the medicine you take for your diabetes. Your body may not be able to respond normally to severe stress such as accidents, surgery, or illness. There may also be some growth of extra body hair (particularly in women), increased appetite, or weight gain.
- Nervous system problems: if you suffer from these problems, fits or epilepsy may become worse, severe unusual headache with visual problems, being unable to sleep, feeling depressed, extreme mood swings, schizophrenia may become worse, headache or problems with your vision (including eye pain or swelling).
- General problems: may make you feel generally unwell or tired.

While you are taking this kind of medicine, you should not come into contact with anyone who has chickenpox, shingles, or measles if you have not already had these illnesses. You may need specialist treatment if you get these diseases. If you think you may have had exposure to any of these diseases, you should talk to your doctor straightaway.

If you are taking Prednisolone, it is very important that you do not stop taking them without advice from your doctor. They may need to cut down your medication slowly, so that your body has time to adjust. If you do not do this you might experience weakness and fatigue (tiredness). If you are worried about possible side effects, discuss your treatment with your doctor before making any changes to your medication.

Withdrawal symptoms can occur when you reduce your dose of Prednisolone. These can include muscle or joint pain, conjunctivitis, fever, weight loss, runny nose, and painful and itchy skin lumps.

What if you forget to take a dose of Prednisolone?

If you forget to take a dose, take one as soon as you remember and then your next dose at the usual time. Never take two doses at the same time.

How do I store the medication?

- Keep it out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store it below 25°C in a dry place and protect it from direct light.
- Do not use the tablets after the expiry date stated on the label, carton, or bottle; the expiry date refers to the last day of that month.

Medicines should not be disposed of via wastewater or household waste.

Ask your pharmacist how to dispose of medicines that are no longer needed. This will help to protect the environment.

Can I still drive and use machines?

If you do not have enough sleep you may be less alert. You should make sure you are not affected before driving or operating machinery.

What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice before taking this medicine.

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff. You can ask someone to contact us on your behalf.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 78 31 45, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Patients should not bring in large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property had been handed in to Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patientinformation