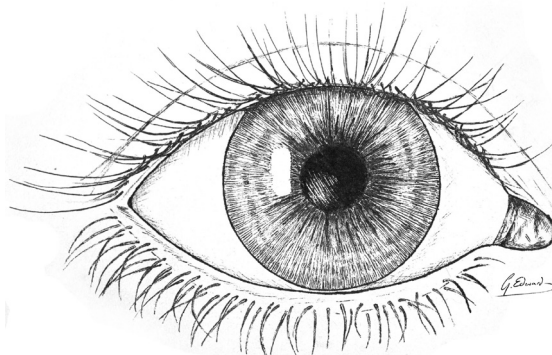


Oral Steroid Tablet Information

Ophthalmology



This information sheet is for patients who have been informed they require Steroid treatment for their eye condition.

Introduction

Steroids are a class of medicines that can help prevent your condition from causing damage to your eyes. You can discuss the benefits and risks of taking steroids with your healthcare professionals before you start treatment, so that you are able to make an informed decision.

What are steroids?

Steroids are a man-made version of chemicals, known as hormones, that are made naturally in the human body. Steroids act like these hormones to reduce inflammation in the body.

They are also known as 'corticosteroids' and are different to 'anabolic steroids' used by bodybuilders and athletes.

The prevention of infection is a major priority in all healthcare and everyone has a part to play.

- **Please decontaminate your hands frequently for 20 seconds using soap and water or alcohol gel if available**
- **If you have symptoms of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, cough or other respiratory symptoms, a temperature or any loss of taste or smell please do not visit the hospital or any other care facility and seek advice from 111**
- **Keep the environment clean and tidy**
- **Let's work together to keep infections out of our hospitals and care homes.**

Why do I have to be on steroids?

Inflammation is the body's natural reaction to infections. Sometimes our immune system, by mistake, can produce inflammation in the body or eyes that can cause permanent damage if left untreated. Inflammation in the eyes (uveitis) can be of different grades and can damage sight to different levels of severity.

What are the benefits?

Your doctor has prescribed a course of steroids for the treatment of your eye inflammation. Steroids effectively reduce this inflammation. They will not cure the condition but will control your symptoms and reduce the activity of your disease.

What are the possible side effects, or risks, of steroids?

You may experience side effects. The most common side effects you may experience are:

- Increased appetite, weight gain and fluid retention
- Thinning of the bones (Osteoporosis)
- Rounding of your face. You may also develop puffiness around the face.
- Raised blood pressure (hypertension)
- Indigestion (dyspepsia); it is important for your doctor to know if you have had an ulcer
- Diabetes; if you already have this, your treatment may need reviewing
- Thinning of the skin leading to easy bruising and delayed wound healing
- Mood changes; you may feel very high or very low
- Cataracts can occasionally occur after steroid treatment
- Glaucoma can sometimes be made worse
- Bleeding and bruising easily
- Raised pressure in the eye

Side effects are more likely with higher doses and with treatment lasting more than 2-3 months or with repeated short courses.

Further information regarding side effects

This leaflet outlines essential information that you need if you have been prescribed this medicine. Not all possible side effects have been listed above. We recommend that you read the package insert leaflet from the manufacturer that is supplied with your medicine for a full list of side effects (uncommon, serious and rare) and drug interactions reported for this medicine.

It is important to tell your doctor if you think you may have an increased risk of any of these side effects or if they become troublesome or if you notice anything unusual.

Are there any other types of steroid treatment?

Steroids can be used in a number of ways for different kinds of uveitis or eye inflammations. These are:

Steroid tablets

Commonly used form is 'prednisolone'. Initially a high dose is prescribed to alleviate the symptoms quickly. These are usually given for a short time to treat flare-ups of your condition. Your doctor can also prescribe steroid infusions by intravenous route for 2-3 days before starting tablets to aggressively treat any severe form of eye inflammation that can be sight threatening.

The tablets need to be reduced slowly. You will be given a plan of how to reduce and stop steroids over several weeks. However, sometimes a low maintenance dose of oral steroids is continued for a longer time depending on your eye condition. You must always take steroids as you are prescribed. You must not stop taking steroid tablets while following a prescribed course, as stopping suddenly can make you experience withdrawal symptoms that can make you feel very unwell and can be serious.

These are taken usually once a day, preferably in the morning, either with or after food to prevent stomach problems. These are available in different strengths like 5 milligram, 2.5 milligram and 1 milligram tablets. Your doctor will also prescribe a medicine to protect your stomach while you are taking steroid tablets.

Local steroid injections

Under certain conditions, oral steroids may not be desirable due to side effects or when they are not expected to make an impact to your eye condition. Your doctor can prescribe steroid injections to be given around the eyes or injecting steroid implants into the eye for lasting effect. These are usually given as a one-off treatment but can be repeated for several months. They only have localised side effects.

Steroid drops

These are used for milder forms of inflammation or uveitis. The drops need to be used in one or both eyes for several weeks. They have minimal localised side effects.

What should I look out for?

Your body's resistance to infection can be reduced while you are taking steroids, which can make you more likely to develop infections that are more severe than normal. It is important to tell your doctor immediately if you have a fever, sore throat or any other symptoms of infection.

Signs of infection can be disguised by steroids, so if you feel unwell or develop any new symptoms after starting steroids it is important to tell your doctor.

Steroids can cause thinning of the bones (osteoporosis), making fractures more likely. If the risk is high, your doctor may advise you to take drugs called bisphosphonates or calcium and vitamin D supplements.

In general it is also a good idea to exercise regularly, make sure you get enough calcium in your diet, and avoid smoking and drinking too much alcohol.

If you have never had chickenpox, you should avoid close contact with people who have chickenpox or shingles. If you do come into contact with people suffering from chickenpox or shingles, see your doctor urgently. You may need antiviral treatment which your doctor will be able to prescribe.

What monitoring will I need?

Your doctor will check your general condition from time to time, which may include your weight, blood pressure, blood sugar levels and urinalysis.

Can I take other medicines while on steroids?

Due to the potential risks of drug interactions with other medications, you should discuss all your current medicines you take with your doctor or pharmacist before starting steroids. You should always tell any doctor treating you that you are taking steroids.

You should not take "over the counter" drugs without first checking with your doctor or pharmacist.

Will it affect immunisation?

If you are taking steroid tablets, it is recommended that you should not have live vaccines, for example, yellow fever. If you require vaccinations it is important to always check with your GP.

Yearly flu vaccines are safe and recommended, but you should consult your doctor before having any vaccinations.

Can I drink alcohol or smoke when taking steroid tablets?

Since both alcohol and steroids can upset the stomach, you should just drink small amounts of alcohol or avoid it. It is also advisable to stop or reduce smoking. It is best to discuss this with your healthcare professional.

How can I reduce the risk of infection?

You should avoid close contact with people who have recently been in hospital or people who have viral infections. Do not eat soft cheese from unpasteurised milk. Cooked chill foods should be reheated thoroughly and salads washed well. Visit the Food Standards Agency website www.food.gov.uk for information on reducing your risk of infection from foods.

Do steroids affect pregnancy?

It is best not to take steroids during pregnancy unless advised by your doctor. If you are planning a family or if you become pregnant while taking steroids, you should discuss this with your doctor as soon as possible. If you become pregnant while you are on steroids, do not stop them before discussing it with your GP. Never stop steroids abruptly.

Do steroids affect breastfeeding?

Small amounts of steroids could pass into the breast milk. You should discuss the risks with your doctor before breastfeeding if you are taking steroid tablets.

What if you forget to take your tablets?

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the missed dose.

Do not take a double dose to make up for a forgotten dose, but wait and take your next dose at the usual time. If you have missed more than one dose, contact your doctor or pharmacist for advice.

Having an operation

If you are having an operation, you might need to stop your steroids. Do not do this without speaking to your doctor or surgeon first as in some cases you might be able to carry on taking them. You may however need to have your dose changed before the operation.

What else should I know about steroid tablets?

When taking steroid tablets you must carry a steroid card which records how much steroids you are on and how long you have been taking them. Your doctor or pharmacist should give you a steroid warning card to carry with you at all times in case of emergencies. Always carry this with you and show it to any doctor, dentist or nurse who is treating you.

Remember:

- Always carry your steroid card
- Never stop your steroids abruptly
- Any concerns; discuss with your doctor or pharmacist
- Consult your doctor before having any vaccinations

General Information about your medicines

- Medicines are an important part of your treatment
- Each medicine has been individually prescribed for you and it is important that you take your medicine exactly as your doctor has told you

- To avoid any problems, please do not stop or change any medicine without telling your doctor first
- If you feel that any problems you are having are possibly caused by your medicines, inform your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible
- Remember to contact your doctor before your prescription has run out to obtain further supplies
- Please return any unused medicines that are no longer needed to a pharmacy for safe disposal
- If you have any questions about your medicines please do not hesitate to contact your doctor, pharmacist or nurse

If you have any further questions or need advice about your treatment do not hesitate to consult your GP, your Eye Doctor or Nurse Specialist in the Ophthalmology Department, New Cross Hospital.

Other useful contacts:

Eye Referral Unit:

01902 695805

Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 5:00pm

Weekends, 8:00am – 3:00pm

Minor Procedures Department

01902 695831

Monday – Friday, 8:30am – 5:00pm

Outside of these hours, please attend the main Emergency Department or contact NHS Direct on telephone number 111.

Further Information on this subject, please check the following websites:

www.111.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk/medicine

www.medicines.org.uk/emc/browse-medicines

www.food.gov.uk

English

If you need information in another way like easy read or a different language please let us know.

If you need an interpreter or assistance please let us know.

Lithuanian

Jeigu norėtumėte, kad informacija jums būtų pateikta kitu būdu, pavyzdžiui, supaprastinta forma ar kita kalba, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Jeigu jums reikia vertėjo ar kitos pagalbos, prašome mums apie tai pranešti.

Polish

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo otrzymać te informacje w innej postaci, na przykład w wersji łatwej do czytania lub w innym języku, prosimy powiedzieć nam o tym.

Prosimy poinformować nas również, jeżeli potrzebowaliby Państwo usługi tłumaczenia ustnego lub innej pomocy.

Punjabi

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ, ਜਿਵੇਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਨ ਵਿਚ ਆਸਾਨ ਰੂਪ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੂਜੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ, ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਭਾਸ਼ੀਏ ਦੀ ਜਾਂ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ।

Romanian

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații în alt format, ca de exemplu caractere ușor de citit sau altă limbă, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau de asistență, vă rugăm să ne informați.

Traditional Chinese

如果您需要以其他方式了解信息，如易读或其他语种，请告诉我们。

如果您需要口译人员或帮助，请告诉我们。