

Prednisone (U.S. only)

What is prednisone?

Prednisone is a steroid hormone and prescription medication that has many effects on the body. It is approved by the FDA to treat a variety of medical conditions.

Prednisone belongs to a large family of medications that go by different names: “corticosteroids,” “glucocorticoids,” or usually just “steroids.” This family includes other medications such as prednisolone, dexamethasone, and others.

Note that the word “steroids” can also refer to testosterone-like hormones. Prednisone is not a testosterone-like hormone.

How does prednisone work?

Prednisone changes the way the cells in your body function. This means that almost any part of your body can be affected by prednisone. Since prednisone weakens the body’s immune system, it can be used to treat lung inflammation in people living with PF.

How should prednisone be taken?

Prednisone comes in tablets. There are many different dosages of prednisone. Your healthcare provider will determine the dose that is right for you. Other forms of “steroids” come in oral liquids, and others can be given intravenously.

How can I obtain prednisone?

Prednisone is only available by prescription.

Will my insurance pay for prednisone?

Prednisone is usually covered by drug plans.

What side effects can occur from prednisone?

Prednisone frequently causes side effects. Different people will have different side effects. Some people have none or only a few side effects. Others have many side effects. Side effects tend to be more common and more severe at higher doses. Here are some of the side effects that may occur:

1. Prednisone can change the way your body looks: weight gain, hair loss, acne (pimples), muscle wasting, thinning of the skin, easy bruising, fluid retention, and a buildup of fat around the cheeks and the back of the neck.
2. Prednisone change the inside of your body: increased risks of diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol; osteoporosis (brittle bones); fractures of the bones; a serious joint complication called “avascular necrosis” that particularly can affect the hips; glaucoma; and hormonal changes.
3. Prednisone can also change how you think and feel: anxiety, depression and mood swings, increased energy, insomnia, personality changes, and rarely psychosis (hallucinations and delusions).
4. Prednisone also increases the risk of developing an infection.

Other side effects are also possible, including allergic reactions.

Are there special precautions I should take if I am taking prednisone?

Yes. It is critical that you do not suddenly stop taking prednisone unless directed by your healthcare provider.

Your healthcare provider may also have additional guidance on lifestyle modification and/or other medications you can take to reduce side effects.

How will my doctor monitor me while I am taking prednisone?

You doctor will monitor you for side effects and may perform blood tests periodically.

What drug interactions should I know about?

Prednisone can interact with a number of medications. Talk to your physician about any medications you are currently taking. It is important to update your physician and pharmacy about any medication changes or additions including all prescriptions, over the counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

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