

ORAL CORTICOSTEROIDS

EMERGENCY ASTHMA MEDICINE

Oral corticosteroids are emergency medicines used to restore control of asthma after a serious episode. These are very strong medications that should only be taken for a short time [3-7 days], and only when other medications cannot get asthma symptoms under control.

Why are oral corticosteroids only used as emergency medicine?

Medication that is taken as a pill or syrup, like oral corticosteroids, goes through the stomach and into the bloodstream before it reaches the lungs. Since it goes all over the body, this means the medicine can cause side effects in other parts of the body. If you are taking a "burst" of oral corticosteroids more than twice a year, you should speak to your doctor about taking long term control medicine.

How are they prescribed?

Oral corticosteroids can be taken as pills or syrup and will take about three hours to start working. They are most effective six to twelve hours after they are swallowed. If you take oral steroids for more than five days, the dose should be gradually reduced under the direction of your doctor. Never stop taking them suddenly.

Side Effects:

Using oral corticosteroids for a short time (3-10 days) may cause side effects including weight gain, fluid retention, rounding of the face, changes in mood, and high blood pressure. These side effects may stop when you stop taking the medicine. Long-term use may lead to additional serious side effects including increased blood sugar, thinning of the bones, cataracts, muscle weakness, slower growth in children, and suppression of the adrenal glands which puts patients at risk during the stress of surgery or infections.

SOME BRAND NAMES OF ORAL STEROIDS USED FOR CHILDREN

(Generic names in parentheses)

Prelone

(Prednisolone)

Pediapred

(Prednisolone)

Medrol

(Methylprednisolone)

Prednisone

(Also the generic name)

Corticosteroids are **not** the same as anabolic steroids which some people use to build muscles. Corticosteroids are naturally occurring substances in the body that fight infection and reduce inflammation. Anabolic steroids build up muscle tissues and are often used by athletes who want to develop bigger muscles. These are two different kinds of drugs.

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