

Before you take your tablets

- Have you ever been told that you are allergic to steroids?
- Have you ever had tuberculosis (TB), diabetes, epilepsy, depression, glaucoma (raised eye pressure), hypertension (high blood pressure), osteoporosis (thinning of the bones) or stomach ulcers?
- Do you have liver or heart disease?
- Have you just been immunised or vaccinated?
- Do you have a viral infection (chicken pox, for example) or any other infection?
- Have you ever been in contact with anyone who has chicken pox?
- Do you think that you may be pregnant?
- Are you taking any other medicines?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, did you tell the doctor?

If not, you should speak to your doctor as soon as possible, before starting the tablets.

Your doctor may still want you to take them.

Some common questions answered

I've missed a dose. What should I do?

If you forget to take a dose, take another as soon as possible. Then go on as before.

I've taken too many tablets at once.

What should I do?

It is important to stick to the instructions given on the label or by your doctor. Taking more than this could be dangerous, especially if too many tablets are taken at one time. If this is the case, don't delay; ask your doctor what to do or contact the nearest hospital accident and emergency department.

I'm not getting better. What should I do?

If you have taken all the course of tablets and you still feel unwell, or if you have not taken all the tablets but feel worse tell your doctor. Steroid tablets are only used when your doctor considers that the benefits outweigh the risk of side effects. Before prescribing them, your doctor will have discussed the pros and cons with you and explained why you need to take them, the dose to take, and for how long.

If there is anything you are unsure about, please ask again.

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The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

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Some information
about your
steroid tablets

Your doctor has prescribed one of the following medicines for you to take:

Prednisolone Dexamethasone Hydrocortisone

This leaflet provides information that is common to all of them. If you need more specific information, please contact your doctor or pharmacist.

What do the tablets do?

The steroid tablets you have been given are not the same as anabolic steroids, which are misused by some bodybuilders. Your steroids (or corticosteroids) are prescribed for the treatment of many different diseases. They are strong medicines which mainly work by reducing inflammation in the body.

If you are not sure why you are on these tablets, make sure you ask the doctor who prescribed them.

Why do I need to read the label?

The label should say the **name** of the tablets, the dose (how many and when to take them), and who they are for. If this information is not clear, or if you are unsure, speak to the doctor or pharmacist. **Do not give these tablets to anyone else.** You may also have been given a steroid card which tells you how many tablets to take each day.

What do I do with my steroid card?

If your doctor asks you to carry a steroid card, be sure to keep it with you. Show it to any doctor, dentist, nurse or midwife,

or anyone else, who is giving you treatment or vaccination. If you are buying other medicines from a chemist, show your card to the pharmacist.

Even after your treatment has finished you should tell anyone who is treating you (doctor, dentist, nurse, midwife or pharmacist) that you have had steroid treatment.

Steroid cards are available from the doctor or pharmacist.

What if I am a diabetic?

Starting steroids might interfere with your diabetic control and changes to your diabetic treatment may be needed. Make sure you discuss this with the doctor who looks after your diabetes.

What should I do after starting the tablets?

You may start to feel better after a few days, but do not stop taking the tablets unless your doctor tells you to.

What if I have to take the tablets for more than two weeks?

Do **not** suddenly stop taking the tablets unless your doctor tells you to; you could become ill. Make sure your supply of tablets does not run out.

Are there any side effects?

Most people taking steroids find they cause no problem if taken at the lowest possible dose for the shortest possible time. As with most medicines, a few people may find the tablets have side effects. If you have to take

these tablets for a long time your doctor will prescribe **as small a dose as possible.**

High doses taken for a very **long time** (months or years) or repeated short courses every few weeks can lead to side effects such as skin thinning, stretch marks, 'moon (rounded) face', weight gain due to increased appetite, acne, eye problems (cataracts or glaucoma), bone thinning or damage, stomach ulcers, irregular monthly periods, raised blood sugar, oedema (swelling, particularly around the ankles, due to fluid), mood changes (euphoria, depression or irritation), or, rarely, muscle weakness. Most of those problems can be reversed by lowering the dose.

In children **high doses for a long time** can stunt growth.

Steroids make it easier for you to pick up infections and they can make infections such as chicken pox worse. If you catch chicken pox, or have been in contact recently with anyone who has had chicken pox, please speak to your doctor immediately. It is also important that you speak to your doctor if you catch chicken pox within three months of stopping your steroids.

If you feel unwell during your course of treatment, or have any unusual discomfort that you do not understand, speak to your doctor.

If you are concerned about the dose or duration of your treatment, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.