

# BETTER HEALTH 4 YOU

SMART LOCAL 36 BENEFIT FUND

ASTHMA, ALLERGIES & COPD

## Prednisone and Asthma

*Steroids, anti-inflammatory drugs such as prednisone, can be used for asthma as well as other lung diseases.*

*Prednisone and other steroids (inhaled, oral, or by injection) help calm airway inflammation in asthma. If you've ever had a serious asthma attack, you may have had high doses of steroids in the hospital administered intravenously.*

### What Is Prednisone?

Prednisone is an oral steroid medication. If you have serious worsening of asthma symptoms (an asthma attack), your doctor may prescribe a brief course of oral steroids such as prednisone. Oral steroids may also be prescribed when your asthma symptoms worsen but you do not require hospitalization.

### How Does Prednisone Treat Asthma?

Oral prednisone is a systemic anti-inflammatory steroid. That means that after taking prednisone by mouth (orally), it is absorbed in the body, unlike inhaled steroids (anti-inflammatory asthma inhalers) that go straight to the lungs. Prednisone decreases your immune system's response to reduce symptoms such as swelling and allergic-type reactions.

Prednisone and other systemic steroids may be used to treat asthma attacks and help people gain better asthma control. Steroids are used with other asthma medications to either control sudden and severe asthma attacks or to treat long-term, hard-to-control asthma.

### How Long Does It Take for Prednisone to Treat Asthma?

Sometimes systemic steroids like prednisone are taken in high doses for a few days. This is called a steroid burst. They may also be given in a low dose daily or every other day for long-term asthma control.

### Is Prednisone the Only Systemic Steroid for Asthma?

Besides prednisone, other systemic steroids used in the treatment of asthma include:

- Medrol, Methylpred, Solu-Medrol (methylprednisolone)
- Deltasone (prednisone)
- Prelone, Pediapred, Orapred, (prednisolone)
- Decadron (dexamethasone)

### Are Prednisone and Other Oral Steroids Safe for Asthma?

While a two-week course or "short burst" of oral steroids like prednisone is relatively safe, it's important to avoid steroids on a long-term basis as there are potential serious

side effects. Taking supplemental calcium may help to prevent osteoporosis or thinning of the bones, which is one of the side effects of long-term steroid use.

### What if I Need to Take Steroids Frequently for Asthma?

If you need steroids frequently for "rescue" therapy, this can suggest poor control of airway inflammation or continued exposure to some unsuspected allergen. In this case, talk to your health care provider about inhaled anti-inflammatory medications.

### What Are the Side Effects of Prednisone and Other Steroids?

Steroids have many potential side effects, especially when given orally and for a long period of time. Side effects with short-term steroid use include:

- Weight gain
- Fluid retention

- High blood pressure
- Elevated blood sugar

Side effects with long-term steroid use include:

- Growth suppression
- Diabetes
- Cataracts of the eyes
- Bone-thinning osteoporosis
- Muscle weakness

### When Are Inhaled Steroids Used for Asthma?

Anti-inflammatory asthma inhalers are the first line of treatment for asthma and may play a role in other lung diseases. In fact, recent studies support the use of anti-inflammatory asthma inhalers early in the course of disease. After introduction of inhaled steroids, the need for oral steroids such as prednisone may decrease.

Unlike the serious side effects of oral steroids, the most common side effects of anti-inflammatory asthma inhalers are hoarseness and thrush, especially in elderly adults. As with all asthma inhalers, you should

rinse the mouth carefully after using your inhaler. Gargle with water after inhalation to help reduce the risk of oral thrush.

## How to Help a Cough

**Drink** Sip water, juice, broth or other clear liquids all day.

**Eat Ice Chips** Ice chips soothe a sore throat.

**Saline Spray** will help your stuffy nose. It helps by loosening mucus and rinsing your sinuses.

**Numb up** Cough drops will help numb and soothe a sore throat.

**Relieve your Pain**-OTC Tylenol, Ibuprofen or naproxen can bring down a fever and help with aches.

**Avoid Smoke** Smoking, secondhand smoke can really bother your nose, throat, and lungs.

**Be a Loner** Avoid contact with others.

**Rest Try** chicken soup

**Vaporize** Cool-mist

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Call me anytime with questions