

# PREDNISONE for treatment of cancer

Other names: Apo-prednisone®



**Important note:** The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

## Why you are taking this medication

Prednisone (PRED-nih-zone) is a steroid that is used to treat many medical problems including some types of cancer. It is a tablet that you take by mouth.

It is important to take prednisone exactly as directed by your doctor. You may be given tablets of more than one strength to make the right dose. Make sure you understand the directions. Take prednisone with food. This helps prevent stomach problems.

For once a day dosing:

- Take your prednisone in the morning with breakfast. This mimics your body's natural rhythm of steroid production.
- If you miss a dose of prednisone, take it as soon as you can if it is the same day as the missed dose. If you remember the next day, skip the missed dose and return to your usual dosing times.

For every other day dosing:

- Take your prednisone in the morning with breakfast. This mimics your body's natural rhythm of steroid production.
- If you miss a dose of prednisone, take it as soon as you can. If it is over 24 hours since your missed dose, take the missed dose and then skip the following day.

For more than once a day dosing:

- Take your prednisone at evenly spaced times during the day starting with breakfast.
- If you miss a dose of prednisone, take it as soon as you can. Take the rest of the day's doses at evenly spaced times. If you remember at the time for the next dose, take the dose and return to your usual dosing times.

Do not stop taking prednisone without telling your doctor. If you are taking prednisone regularly, make sure that you always have a new supply on hand before you run out. After long-term use, your dose of prednisone will be reduced slowly before stopping. This helps your body adjust to making its own steroid again.

Store prednisone tablets out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.

Your doctor may tell you to follow a diet that is low in salt and sodium, but high in calcium, potassium and protein. This helps prevent side effects with long-term use.

Tell doctors or dentists that you are being treated with prednisone before you receive any treatment from them.

If you are taking prednisone for more than a few days at a time, ask your doctor if you need to wear a medical alert bracelet or tag to inform doctors in an emergency as you may need extra steroids.

### Other medication

Other drugs may interact with prednisone. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medicine including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new medicines.

Alcohol may increase the risk of some side effects of prednisone. Discuss the safety of a drink of alcohol with your doctor.

### Pregnancy and breast feeding

It is best to use birth control while being treated with prednisone. Prednisone may affect sperm production and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy.

Tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant.

Do not breast feed during treatment with doses higher than 5 mg a day.

### Side effects

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
<p><b>Heartburn and indigestion</b> may occur. There may be an increased risk of stomach problems such as bleeding ulcers especially if you have had stomach problems before.</p>	<p>To help with heartburn or indigestion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your prednisone with food.</li> <li>• Take antacids one hour before <i>or</i> two hours after prednisone. <b>Note:</b> do not take antacids within one hour before <i>or</i> two hours after prednisone. Antacids can reduce the effectiveness of prednisone when taken at the same time.</li> </ul> <p>Some medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen may increase your risk of bleeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by a doctor.</li> <li>• For minor pain, try paracetamol first.</li> </ul>

SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
You may have <b>mood changes</b> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See your doctor as soon as possible during office hours. Your doctor may change your dose</li> </ul>
<b>Sugar control</b> may be affected in diabetics. Some people may become diabetic when treated with prednisone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check your blood or urine sugar regularly if you usually use test strips.</li> </ul>
<b>Swelling of hands, feet or lower legs</b> may occur if your body retains extra fluid especially with long-term use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elevate your feet when sitting.</li> <li>• Avoid tight clothing.</li> <li>• Avoid foods high in salt or sodium.</li> </ul>
<b>Increased appetite and weight gain</b> may occur. With long-term use, your face and shoulders may become rounded even without weight gain. This will slowly return to normal once you stop taking prednisone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eat healthy, well balanced meals.</li> </ul>
Your body's ability to handle <b>illness or injury</b> is weakened by prednisone. This will slowly return to normal after you stop taking prednisone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check with your doctor if you have an infection, illness or injury.</li> <li>• You may need extra steroids to help you get better.</li> </ul>
<b>High blood pressure</b> may occur with long-term use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have your blood pressure checked regularly.</li> <li>• Avoid foods and drinks high in salt or sodium.</li> </ul>
<b>Bone loss</b> (osteoporosis) may occur with long-term use.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the risk of bone loss with your doctor.</li> </ul>

**See your doctor or get emergency help immediately if you have:**

- Signs of an **infection** such as fever (your body temperature over 38°C); chills; cough; sore throat; pain or burning when you pass urine; redness, pain or swelling of any area of your body; sores forming anywhere on your body.
- Signs of **bleeding ulcers** such as black, tarry stools (bowel motions); blood in stool; continuing stomach or abdominal pain.

**See your doctor as soon as possible (during office hours) if you have:**

- Signs of **fluid problems** such as shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, swelling of feet or lower legs, rapid weight gain.
- Signs of **low potassium** such as vomiting, muscle cramps or weakness, numbness or tingling of the lower legs and feet, mental confusion.
- Signs of **blood sugar problems** such as thirst, needing to drink a lot, or frequent need to pass urine (need to pee a lot).
- Signs of **bone problems** such as pain in your back, ribs, arms or legs.
- Changes in **eye sight**.

**Check with your doctor if any of the following continue or bother you:**

- Uncontrolled nausea, vomiting or heartburn.
- Mood changes, nervousness, problems sleeping.
- Acne or other skin changes.
- Unusual bruising.
- Wounds that do not heal.
- For diabetics: uncontrolled blood sugars.
- For women: changes in menstrual periods.

**Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist**