

## Children's Arthritis Treatment Information

### Steroids (Prednisolone)

Steroids are powerful anti-inflammatory drugs we use to treat childhood arthritis.

How steroids work

Steroids (glucocorticoids) occur naturally in the body and are important for a number of daily functions. Steroids are used as a treatment for arthritis to:

- Reduce joint swelling
- Reduce pain
- Reduce heat
- Reduce morning stiffness

This should enable you to become more active.

How should I take the steroids?

The prednisolone tablets come in three strengths: 1mg (white tablet), 2.5mg (brown tablet) and 5mg (red tablet). The dose of steroid that you are given will depend upon how much inflammation there is in your joints. Once the inflammation is under control, the dose will be reduced as much as possible. It is best to take Prednisolone with a meal, snack, or glass of milk. This helps to prevent stomach upsets.

#### **NEVER CHANGE THE DOSE OR STOP THE MEDICATION WITHOUT GUIDANCE FROM YOUR DOCTOR**

#### **What should I do if I vomit after taking the medication?**

If you do vomit within 45 minutes of taking the medication, repeat the dose. If you vomit more than 45 minutes since taking the medication, do not repeat the dose.

#### **What should I do if I miss a dose?**

If you miss a tablet take your next dose at the normal time. Never give a double dose for a missed dose.

#### **Are there any side effects?**

All steroids carry a risk of side effects. These will depend on the dose of the steroid and the length of time that the child is on the medication. The aim is to reduce the steroids to the lowest dose needed or stop them as soon as possible. Other disease-modifying medications are used to replace steroids where appropriate.

**Weight Gain:** This can be due to an increase in appetite. Steroids can cause the body to retain more fluid than usual and also increase the amount of fat it normally lays down. On discontinuation of steroids it is possible to lose this weight.

**Reduced Growth Rate:** This can be caused by long term treatment with steroids.

## Rheumatology department Patient Information

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**Menstrual Irregularities:** There can be changes in frequency, flow and duration of menstrual periods that can sometimes be overcome by taking steroids on alternate days.

If steroids are taken over many years at high doses there is a risk that they may cause diabetes and osteoporosis (thin bones).

### Important Information

If your child is injured (e.g. has a bad fall) and is treated as an Emergency, make sure that the Emergency doctor knows that he /she is taking Prednisolone.

**Immunisations** - before any immunisations or vaccinations are given your doctor must be informed.

**Chickenpox** - if there is direct contact with chickenpox and you are unsure whether your child has had it then you must contact your doctor. A special medication to try and prevent chickenpox may need to be given (zoster immune globulin).

### Contact Details

If you have any further questions or need advice about your treatment phone the Rheumatology Advice line on

**01202 442849.**

[www.poole.nhs.uk/our\\_services/rheumatology.asp](http://www.poole.nhs.uk/our_services/rheumatology.asp)

For further health-related information, please contact:

**The Health Information & Resource Centre**

Poole Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Longfleet Road

Poole

BH15 2JB

Telephone: (01202) 448003

Rheumatology Practitioners

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**We can supply this information in larger print, on audiotape, or have it translated for you. A member of staff will be happy to discuss this with you. Please call PALS on 01202 448499 or the Health Information Centre on 01202 448003 for further advice**