



## ... Oral Corticosteroids

Corticosteroids, commonly referred to as a “steroids” may be used to treat a moderate or severe asthma attack. These oral medications can quickly reduce swelling, redness, and mucus in the airways, allowing you to control the asthma flare-up sooner. Corticosteroids are more powerful than inhaled steroids and are preferably used only for a short time, usually 3-5 days.

### Examples

- Prednisone (Apo-prednisone®, Jaa-prednisone®, Novo-prednisone®), available in liquid and tablets
- Prednisolone (Pediapred®, PMS-prednisolone®), available in liquid
- Dexamethasone (Decadron®), available in liquid and tablets

### Special instructions

- Doses vary with each child and can only be prescribed by your child's health care provider. Give this medication only as prescribed by your child's health care provider.
- Never give your child steroids without first talking to your child's health care provider.
- Never stop giving your child steroids without first asking your child's doctor.
- Taking the tablets or liquid with food to help reduce stomach upset.
- If your child is going to have surgery or other stressful situations while on steroids, talk to your child's health care provider.
- Store the medication according to the instructions on the bottle/package.
- Do not use after the expiration date on the bottle/package.
- Keep this medication out of the reach of children.

### If you miss a dose

- If you miss a dose or forget to give this medicine, give it as soon as you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose, then skip the missed dose. Do not give extra medication to make up for the missed dose. **If you are unsure what to do about a missed dose, contact your health care provider or pharmacist.**
- If your child vomits within 30 minutes of taking the medication, you should repeat the dose because the medication was not absorbed by the body.
- If your child is old enough to swallow pills, ask your child's health care provider if the dose can be given as a tablet. Some children describe the liquid as “yucky”.
- Talk with your child's health care provider about side effects and proper dosing schedule if your child will be taking steroids for more than 1-2 weeks.

### Side effects

Contact your child's health care provider if any of the following persist or become bothersome:

- increased hunger leading to increased weight gain
- dizziness, headache
- dry, red skin
- upset stomach or vomiting
- mood or behavior changes



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### Warning signs

Call your child's health care provider immediately if your child has any of the following occur:

- black, tar-like bowel movements
- vomiting of blood
- dizziness
- swelling of feet and/or hands
- unusual bleeding or bruising
- increased thirst
- wounds that do not heal
- increased sweating

### Additional information

Your child may be at an increased risk for infection while taking prednisone or prednisolone or dexamethasone. Call your child's health care provider if your child develops signs of an infection like sores that don't heal or are painful and/or red, fever, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, diarrhea, or sore throat.

You should notice an improvement in your child's asthma symptoms while receiving prednisone or prednisolone or dexamethasone. If your child's asthma symptoms do not improve or get worse, contact your child's health care provider.

### Contact us

For additional information on this or any Health Topic, please contact the Family Support and Resource Centre ([www.bcchildrens.ca/frl](http://www.bcchildrens.ca/frl)), or your pediatrician.

### References from:

- The Children's Asthma Education Centre: [www.asthma-education.com](http://www.asthma-education.com)
- Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center: [www.cincinnatichildrens.org](http://www.cincinnatichildrens.org)
- The Asthma Society of Canada: [www.asthma.ca](http://www.asthma.ca)
- Canadian Lung Association: [www.lung.ca](http://www.lung.ca)

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