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## Glucocorticoids Information

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### 1. What are Glucocorticoids?

Glucocorticoids are also known as corticosteroids, or just steroids. They are synthetic products which mimic cortisol, the body's naturally occurring glucocorticoid made in the adrenal cortex. Glucocorticoids should not be confused with the type of performance enhancing steroids some athletes have used.

### 2. What are different types of Glucocorticoids?

Prednisone is the most common type taken by mouth. It usually comes in 1mg, 5mg, and 50mg tablets. Some patients are on a combination of different strength tablets. It is important not to confuse the different strengths; this can be very dangerous.

### 3. How do Glucocorticoids Work?

Glucocorticoids can suppress and modulate the body's immune system, making them a powerful option in the treatment for some autoimmune diseases.

### 4. How soon will I feel the effects of Glucocorticoids?

Oral prednisone can begin to have an effect as early as 30 minutes after administration.

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## Oral Glucocorticoids (Prednisone)

### 1. What are the possible side effects of taking Prednisone (oral glucocorticoids)?

Possible side effects include:

- Poor sleep
- Increasing weight
- Increasing appetite
- Thinning of the skin
- Weaker muscle
- Mood changes/disrupted thinking



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- Increased risk of developing stomach ulcers, diabetes, glaucoma, cataracts, hypertension and heart disease
- Increased risk of developing serious infections
- Increased risk of developing osteoporosis and bone fractures
- Disruption of the body's own ability to make cortisol

## **2. Is there anything I can do to reduce these side effects?**

Discuss with your doctor to ensure you are always on the lowest dose possible with shortest duration to treat your condition effectively and safely. Different conditions require different dose regimens. Take your prednisone in the morning, not the evening. This is similar to the body's natural cortisol production and may decrease any negative effects on sleep. While prednisone can cause weight gain, try to control the urge to increase your caloric intake. Take Calcium 500mg three times daily and Vitamin D 1000 units daily for bone protection, in addition to regular physical activity. Discuss with your doctor if you need to take any other medications to reduce the risk of osteoporosis.

Let your doctor know if you are at increased risk for any diseases, particularly diabetes, so you can be monitored more closely. Make sure you follow your doctor's advice on how to safely reduce your prednisone dose. It can be very dangerous to suddenly stop prednisone.

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

If you miss your dose, you can take it as soon as you remember it. If you forget entirely, do not take an extra dose the next day; just resume your regular dose.

## **4. How do I safely stop glucocorticoids?**

Glucocorticoids cannot be stopped suddenly, particularly for those patients who have been taking them for greater than 2 weeks. This can be very dangerous to your health.

Always consult with your physician to determine a safe and effective strategy to stop your steroids.