PREDNISONE, PREDNISOLONE, METHYLPREDNISOLONE

Also known as steroids or corticosteroids
- Prednisone is available as a tablet and suspension.
- Prednisolone is available as a liquid.
- Methylprednisolone is available as an injection administered into the veins.

What is this medication for?
Prednisone, prednisolone and methylprednisolone are also referred to as corticosteroids or steroids. These steroids are different from the type used by some athletes. They are used for their anti-inflammatory and immunosuppressive effects. They lower your immune system and prevent rejection. They can also treat mild acute rejection when given in high doses.

How should I take this medication?
Always take prednisone and prednisolone with food or milk to prevent stomach upset.
If you take prednisone and prednisolone just once a day, take your dose in the morning with breakfast. This mimics your body’s natural rhythm of steroid production.
Methylprednisolone is an injectable medication routinely given in large doses during your transplant operation and in the first few days following surgery to prevent rejection.
You may be started on high doses of prednisone, prednisolone or methylprednisolone in cases of acute rejection. The dose will be decreased gradually to the smallest effective dose, but you may need to continue this small dose indefinitely.

Some possible side effects

NOTE: Majority of the side effects only appear when prednisone, prednisolone or methylprednisolone is taken at high doses for a long period of time. When taken for short periods of time or at really low doses, most side effects are uncommon.

- **Heartburn or nausea, stomach ulcers**
  Take prednisone and prednisolone with food or milk. Your doctor may put you on a medication to protect your stomach for example ranitidine (Zantac®) or pantoprazole (Tecta®).

- **Swelling or high blood pressure**
  Avoid salty foods, elevate your feet when sitting, check your blood pressure regularly.

- **High blood sugars, especially in patients with diabetes**
  Check your blood sugar regularly if you are diabetic.

Management of side effects
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Advice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased appetite / weight gain</td>
<td>Eat healthy, well-balanced meals, eat foods that are lower in fat and avoid high calorie snacks like chips, chocolate bars and sugared drinks. Ask the dietitian to help you with an eating plan.</td>
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<td>Bone loss (osteoporosis) can occur with long-term use</td>
<td>Taking calcium, vitamin D can help prevent osteoporosis. Other medications can be used to help with these symptoms if they are very bothersome. It is important to have regular eye examinations.</td>
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<td>Changes in behaviour including trouble sleeping, decreased mood, nightmares, nervousness</td>
<td>These symptoms usually appear if you take high doses for a prolonged period of time. These changes do not last long and will start to improve after your steroid dose is reduced.</td>
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<td>Vision changes, cataracts, glaucoma</td>
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<td>Changes in appearance (rounder face, more fat deposits around waist and the back of the neck, stretch marks, acne on face, back and chest)</td>
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<td>Slower wound healing</td>
<td>Inform your transplant doctor if this becomes an issue.</td>
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