Prednisone (Sterapred®, Prednisone Intensol)

Pronounced: PRED-ni-sone

Classification: Glucocorticoid

About Prednisone (Sterapred®, Prednisone Intensol)

Prednisone is a corticosteroid, similar to a hormone that is made naturally in your body. Corticosteroids (sometimes abbreviated as "steroids") are used to decrease inflammation (swelling and/or redness) and thus are involved in the management of a number of diseases, including asthma, autoimmune disorders, reactions to medications, and gastrointestinal disorders (colitis), among others. Prednisone may be given to prevent a reaction to a medication, to prevent or decrease nausea or can be used in high doses to treat certain cancers.

How to Take Prednisone

Prednisone comes as a tablet to take by mouth. The tablet should be swallowed whole. You should not break or chew the tablet. Prednisone is best taken with food, as it can irritate your stomach. Your doctor will probably tell you to take your dose(s) of prednisone at certain time(s) of the day, every day. Your personal dosing schedule will depend on what the medication is being used for. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible. If it is too close to your next dose, skip the missed dose and resume your schedule.

Do not stop taking this medication without first speaking to your care provider as this could cause side effects such as weakness, fatigue, decreased appetite, weight loss, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.

This medication can affect the levels of many other medications including warfarin, cyclosporine, oral birth control pills, phenytoin, bupropion, thalidomide, erythromycin, ketoconazole, and ritonavir, among others. Be sure to tell your healthcare provider about all medications and supplements you take.

You, or anyone you live with, should avoid having live or live-attenuated vaccines while receiving this medication. These include herpes zoster (Zostavax) for shingles prevention, oral polio, measles, nasal flu vaccine (FluMist®), rotavirus, and yellow fever vaccines.

Storage and Handling

Store your medication in the original, labeled container at room temperature and in a dry location (unless otherwise directed by your healthcare provider or pharmacist). Keep containers out of reach of children and pets.

Where do I get this medication?

Prednisone is available through most pharmacies. Your oncology team will work with your prescription drug plan to identify an in-network pharmacy for the distribution of this medication.

Insurance Information

This medication may be covered under your prescription drug plan. Patient assistance may be available to qualifying individuals without prescription drug coverage. Your care team can help you find these resources if they are available.

Possible Side Effects of Prednisone
There are a number of things you can do to manage the side effects of prednisone. Talk to your care team about these recommendations. They can help you decide what will work best for you. These are some of the most common or important side effects:

**Swelling**
Patients may notice swelling in their hands and/or feet. Elevating the feet may help to lessen swelling in the feet and ankles. Avoid restrictive or tight clothing that may make it harder for the fluid to drain from the hands, feet, and ankles.

**Increased Risk of Infection**
This medication can lower your ability to fight new and current infections. Contact your provider if you are experiencing any signs of infections including fever, chills, sore throat or cold, cough or burning with urination.

Tips to preventing infection:

- **Washing hands**, both yours and your visitors, is the best way to prevent the spread of infection.
- Avoid large crowds and people who are sick (i.e.: those who have a cold, fever, or cough or live with someone with these symptoms).
- When working in your yard, wear protective clothing including long pants and gloves.
- Do not handle pet waste.
- Keep all cuts or scratches clean.
- Shower or bath daily and perform frequent mouth care.
- Do not cut cuticles or ingrown nails. You may wear nail polish, but not fake nails.
- Ask your doctor or nurse before scheduling dental appointments or procedures.
- Ask your doctor or nurse before you, or someone you live with has any vaccinations.

**Weakening of the Bones (Osteoporosis)**
Long-term use can lead to early osteoporosis. Your doctor may have you get a bone density scan (DEXA scan) to assess your bone health if you are on long-term therapy.

**Eye Problems**
Long-term use of this medication can increase the pressure in your eyes. Report any changes in vision, blurry or double vision, and eye pain or redness.

**Increase in Appetite**
Prednisone can cause you to be hungrier or thirstier than usual. Drink plenty of fluids and try to make your snacks healthy ones.

**Increase in Energy**
Prednisone can cause an increase in energy. You may also develop insomnia, or difficulty sleeping. Taking the medication in the morning may help to prevent this.

**Irritability or Change in Mood**
Some patients report feeling irritable or notice a change in their mood while taking prednisone. If this becomes difficult to handle or if you feel like you may harm yourself or others, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

**Nausea and Heartburn**
Taking prednisone with food or milk is generally enough to prevent nausea and heartburn. If possible, take the medication when you can be upright (not lying down) for a few hours after the dose. Avoid things that worsen the symptoms, and try antacids (milk of magnesia and calcium tablets, like Tums), saltines, or ginger ale to lessen symptoms.

**Increased Blood Sugar**
Prednisone can increase your blood sugar. Diabetics should monitor their blood sugar closely and may require higher doses of insulin while taking prednisone. Patients who are not diabetics but are having increased blood sugar levels may be instructed...
to check their blood sugar and administer insulin while taking prednisone. Your provider will determine if this is necessary.

**GI Bleed & Tear**

This medication can cause bleeding or a tear in the intestinal wall. Signs of these problems include: unexpected bleeding, blood in the stool or black stools, coughing up blood, vomiting blood, vomit that looks like coffee grounds, fever, severe pain in the abdomen, or new abdominal swelling. If you experience any of these, contact your oncology care team immediately or go to the emergency room.

**Other Side Effects**

Prednisone can cause delayed wound healing, headaches, muscle weakness, and cataracts (after long-term use).

**Reproductive Concerns**

Exposure of an unborn child to this medication could cause birth defects in rare cases, so you should not become pregnant or father a child while on this medication. Even if your menstrual cycle stops or you believe you are not producing sperm, you could still be fertile and conceive. You should consult with your healthcare team before breastfeeding while receiving this medication.

OncoLink is designed for educational purposes only and is not engaged in rendering medical advice or professional services. The information provided through OncoLink should not be used for diagnosing or treating a health problem or disease. It is not a substitute for professional care. If you have or suspect you may have a health problem or have questions or concerns about the medication that you have been prescribed, you should consult your health care provider.