

## Prednisone

### Description

Prednisone (also called Deltasone<sup>®</sup> or Orasone<sup>®</sup>) is a man-made steroid that works like a natural steroid made by the adrenal gland in your body. This medicine has several uses:

- To relieve inflammation (swelling, heat, redness, and pain)
- To treat certain types of cancer
- To treat severe allergies and asthma
- Combined with other medicines to treat ACTH deficiency (low stress hormone)
- To prevent graft-versus-host disease after stem cell transplants

Prednisone is available as 5-mg, 20-mg, and 50-mg white tablets and as a clear liquid (known as prednisolone). All are taken by mouth.

### Possible side effects

#### Early

- Irritated stomach (burning)

#### Later (usually more than a day after treatment starts)

- Headache
- Feeling dizzy
- Changes in personality and mood
- Increased appetite
- Problems sleeping
- Acne
- Eye problems (cataracts, glaucoma)
- Changes in menstrual cycle
- Weight gain, mainly in the face and abdomen
- Retaining water, which can cause high blood pressure
- Increased white blood count, but decreased number of infection-fighting cells
- Increased chance of infection
- Increased blood sugar levels

*This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.*

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- Decreased potassium levels, especially if you are taking other medicines that also decrease potassium levels in the blood
- Muscle weakness, decreased muscle mass, impaired wound healing, decreased growth, thin fragile skin, and weakened bones (usually after taking prednisone for a long time).

These are the most common side effects, but there may be others. Please report all side effects to the doctor or nurse.

**In case of a severe side effect or reaction, call the doctor, nurse, or pharmacist at 595-3300. If you are outside the Memphis area, dial toll-free 1-866-2STJUDE (1-866-278-5833), and press 0 once the call is connected.**

### Special instructions

- Do not stop taking this medicine until the doctor tells you to do so.
- Always take this medicine with food or milk to decrease stomach burning.
- Prednisone can hide a fever. Watch for signs of infection. Tell the doctor or nurse as soon as possible if you see such signs. Refer to “Do you know... The signs of infection.”
- Wash your face 2 times a day with soap and water to decrease the chance that temporary acne will develop.
- Your doctor may put you on a low-sodium, high-protein diet. Sodium (salt) makes the body retain fluid. The nutritionist will tell you what foods to avoid and will suggest snacks to help you deal with increased appetite.
- Urine and blood tests may be needed to check for high sugar levels.
- Blood tests may be needed to check potassium levels. You may have to take potassium by mouth to maintain a normal level of potassium in the blood.
- Prednisone may affect the way some medicines work. Some medicines may also affect the way prednisone works. These medicines include:
  - Insulin,
  - Warfarin,
  - Phenytoin,
  - Phenobarbital,
  - Ketoconazole,
  - Aspirin,
  - Ibuprofen, and
  - Rifampin.
- Always tell your doctor if you are taking any of these medicines or if you start taking any new medicine while you are taking prednisone.

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