Prednisolone (Deltacortril, Deltastab, Dilacort)

Prednisolone belongs to a class of medicines known as corticosteroids (more commonly called steroids).

Your pharmacist will give you a blue steroid treatment card if you need to take prednisolone for more than a few weeks. Carry this with you at all times.

If you need any medical treatment, make sure the person treating you knows you are taking prednisolone. This is because your dose may need to be increased for a short while.

About prednisolone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of medicine</th>
<th>Corticosteroid</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used for</td>
<td>To help control inflammatory and allergic conditions such as asthma, rheumatoid arthritis and colitis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Also called</td>
<td>Deltacortril®, Deltastab®, Dilacort®</td>
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<tr>
<td>Available as</td>
<td>Tablets, enteric-coated tablets (these are also known as gastro-resistant tablets), soluble tablets, and injection</td>
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</table>

Prednisolone belongs to a group of medicines called corticosteroids. It is sometimes referred to as an oral steroid, or simply, a steroid. Oral steroids are used to treat a large number of conditions. Some examples include: asthma, inflammatory bowel diseases (for example, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis), autoimmune diseases (for example, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), sarcoidosis), joint and muscle diseases (for example, rheumatoid arthritis), and allergies. They are also used in the treatment of some cancers. Steroids work in part by suppressing your body's immune system, and this reduces swelling and inflammation.

There are also a number of separate medicine leaflets available which provide information about other formulations of prednisolone. These are called Prednisolone rectal preparations, Prednisolone eye drops for inflammation, and Prednisolone ear drops.

Before taking prednisolone

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking prednisolone it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you are pregnant, trying for a baby or breast-feeding.
- If you have high blood pressure.
- If you have had a heart attack or have any other heart problems.
- If you have liver or kidney problems.
- If you (or anyone in your family) have diabetes mellitus or glaucoma (increased eye pressure).
- If you have osteoporosis (weakened bones).
- If you have an underactive thyroid.
- If you have ever had a mental health problem, such as depression or psychosis.
If you have epilepsy.
If you have had a stomach ulcer or an inflammatory bowel disorder.
If you have recently had, or are about to have, any vaccinations.
If you have any kind of infection, or if you have ever had tuberculosis (TB).
If you (or anyone you are in close contact with) have recently had chickenpox, measles or shingles.
If you have ever had a blood clot in an artery or vein.
If you have myasthenia gravis (this is a condition causing muscle weakness).
If you are taking any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, such as herbal and complementary medicines.
If you have had an allergic reaction to a medicine, or if you have developed muscle pain after taking a steroid medicine.

How to take prednisolone

Before starting this treatment, read the manufacturer’s printed information leaflet from inside the pack, and also any other printed information you have been given by your doctor or pharmacist. The manufacturer’s leaflet will give you more information about prednisolone and a full list of side-effects which you may experience from taking it.

Your doctor or pharmacist will tell you how many tablets to take for each dose. It is usual to take prednisolone once daily, in the morning after breakfast.

Most prednisolone tablets should be taken with food. The food helps to protect the lining of your stomach from any irritation. If you have been given enteric-coated tablets (these are red or brown), these tablets are specially coated to help protect your stomach and can be taken either before or after food.

Enteric-coated (red or brown) tablets should be swallowed whole - do not chew or crush them. Also, it is important that you do not take any indigestion remedies (such as an antacid) during the two hours before you take a dose or during the two hours after you have taken a dose. This is because they interfere with the special coating on your tablets.

Some prednisolone tablets can be taken dissolved in water. If you have any difficulties swallowing, ask your doctor if this type of tablet would be more suitable for you.

Depending upon the reason why you are prescribed prednisolone, you may be asked to take a shortcourse (for five days or so), or on a regular basis for a longer period of time. Continue to take prednisolone regularly until your doctor tells you to stop. If you take prednisolone for more than about three weeks, stopping treatment suddenly can cause problems, so your doctor will reduce your dose gradually when necessary.

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you do not remember until the following day, skip the missed dose. Do not take two doses together to make up for a forgotten dose.

Getting the most from your treatment

If you are prescribed prednisolone for more than three weeks, you will be given a 'steroid treatment card' which says that you are on steroids and contains some important advice for you. It is important that you read this card and carry it with you at all times. It also contains details about your dose, how long you have been taking prednisolone, and who prescribed it for you. Please make sure that this information is kept up-to-date. If you are having an operation or dental treatment or any treatment for an injury, tell the person carrying out the treatment that you are taking prednisolone and show them your treatment card. This is because your dose may need adjusting.

Try to keep your regular appointments with your doctor. This is so your doctor can check on your progress. Your doctor will want you to have tests from time to time to make sure you remain free from some of the unwanted side-effects of treatment.

Prednisolone can suppress your immune system, so it is important if you become ill that you make an appointment to see your doctor straightaway. Also, if you come into contact with anyone who has measles, shingles or chickenpox (or anyone who suspects they might have them), you must see your doctor as soon as possible.

If you have diabetes you may need to check your blood glucose more frequently, as prednisolone tablets may affect the levels of sugar in your blood. Your doctor will be able to advise you about this.

Some vaccines are not suitable for you while you are being treated with prednisolone. If you need any immunisations, make sure you mention that you are taking an oral steroid.

If you buy any medicines, check with your pharmacist that they are suitable for you to take with prednisolone. Some anti-inflammatory painkillers (such as ibuprofen) can increase the risk of side-effects and may not be suitable.
Can prednisolone cause problems?

Along with its useful effects, prednisolone can cause unwanted side-effects which your doctor will discuss with you. The benefits of taking prednisolone usually outweigh the side-effects, although unwanted effects can sometimes be troublesome. The table below contains some of the most common ones. You will find a full list in the manufacturer’s information leaflet supplied with your medicine. Although not everyone experiences side-effects, and some will improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, you should speak with your doctor or pharmacist if you become concerned about any of the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common prednisolone side-effects</th>
<th>What can I do if I experience this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abdominal pain, indigestion, feeling sick</td>
<td>Stick to simple meals - avoid rich or spicy food. If you are sick and there is blood present, you should speak with your doctor straightaway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood or behaviour changes, especially at the beginning of treatment</td>
<td>If you become confused, irritable or start having worrying thoughts about harming yourself, speak with your doctor as soon as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties sleeping, feeling confused, increased weight, thrush, muscle weakness, feeling tired, irregular periods</td>
<td>If any of these become troublesome, speak with your doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-term treatment with prednisolone may cause other unwanted effects</td>
<td>If you have any symptoms which are causing you concern, you should arrange to see your doctor for advice</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

For more information about side-effects which are possible when prednisolone is taken long-term, see the separate condition leaflet called **Oral Steroids**.

How to store prednisolone

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.

Important information about all medicines

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

Further reading & references

- Manufacturer’s PIL, Deltacortril® gastro-resistant tablets; Alliance Pharmaceuticals, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated July 2013.
- Manufacturer’s PIL, Prednisolone Tablets 1 mg, 5 mg: Actavis UK Ltd, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated February 2011.

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