

What is Prednisone?

Prednisone is a steroid that has multiple uses. It can be used in the treatment of acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) or lymphoma, to relieve inflammation, to treat severe allergies and asthma, or to manage graft-versus-host disease after stem cell transplant.

How does it work?

Prednisone is a man-made steroid that works like a natural steroid made by the adrenal gland in your body. In high dose it suppresses your immune system and stops certain functions within cancer cells resulting in the death of the cells.

How is it given?

Prednisone is given by mouth as a tablet. Prednisone can be provided as a liquid by your pharmacy (known as prednisolone).

Special instructions:

- Prednisone can irritate the stomach. Taking prednisone with food or milk can decrease this. Your doctor may prescribe you a medication, for example, omeprazole or ranitidine, to limit the irritation.
- Prednisone can hide fevers. Watch for signs of infection closely and inform a doctor or nurse if you see any signs.
- Your blood sugars can increase while on prednisone. You may be prescribed additional medications to manage this.
- Prednisone can cause temporary acne. Washing your face regularly can minimise this.

Possible Side Effects:

Listed below, but not limited to, are the more commonly experienced side effects that you may see. The side effects your child might experience may be temporary and some may be permanent.

	Likely Happens to 21-100 children out of every 100	Less Likely Happens to 5-20 children out of every 100	Rare but serious Happens to <5 children out of every 100
Immediate Within 1-2 days of receiving the medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overeating ▪ Difficulty sleeping or falling asleep 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upset and irritated stomach with heartburn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High levels of uric acid in the blood
Prompt Within 2-3 weeks, prior to the next course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decreased ability of the body to fight infection ▪ Personality changes with mood swings. ▪ Acne[^] ▪ Changes in hormone production that can cause weight gain around the belly and shoulders, puffy cheeks, muscle weakness and make your body less able to deal with stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High blood sugar which may require treatment ▪ Red face ▪ Wounds don't heal well ▪ Infections ▪ Fluid retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inflammation of the pancreas[^] ▪ Increased pressure in the eyes[^] ▪ High blood pressure ▪ Headache ▪ Dizziness ▪ Serious changes in personality and/or severe depression

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Delayed Anytime later during therapy, excluding the above conditions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stretch marks and easy bruising of the skin ▪ Muscle weakness ▪ Lessening of calcium in the bones making them more susceptible to fractures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bone fractures[^] ▪ Slowed growth ▪ Stomach and intestinal tract bleeding from ulcers ▪ Increased pressure in the brain which can lead to difficulty seeing, pressure in the eyes and headaches ▪ Damage to the joints which can result in pain and loss of motion usually involving the joints of the hip or knee^{^*} ▪ Osteonecrosis[#] ▪ Kidney stones that may cause back, stomach or pelvic pain and/or main lead to blood in urine[^]
Late Anytime later after completion of therapy		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cataracts which are usually reversible in children once the prednisone is stopped 	

[^]Toxicity may occur later *Less common in children < 10 years

[#]Steroid is a known cause of a condition called osteonecrosis. Osteonecrosis develops due to temporary or permanent loss of blood supply to the bones. Without blood, the bone tissue dies and begins to breakdown. This is more commonly seen in the hip joint. If the bones near a joint break down, it can cause the joint to collapse. Osteonecrosis can cause pain, if severe, you may require surgery.

This information sheet is a brief overview. Each individual can respond differently to the medication, it is vital that you communicate all signs and symptoms you observe to a doctor or nurse.

If you have any questions about the information provided please discuss them with your oncologist or haematologist.

Further information can be obtained from your doctor, nurse or pharmacist or at the following website:
<http://medsafe.govt.nz/consumers/medicine/where.asp>