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## ***Oral Steroids***

### **What are other names for this drug?**

Some of the names for oral steroids are prednisone, prednisolone, and methylprednisolone. Some product names include Orapred Syrup, Prelone Syrup, Pediapred Oral Solution, and Medrol.

### **What does this drug do?**

Oral steroids are strong medicines that are most often used for quick-relief of moderate to severe asthma episodes. If you have severe asthma, oral steroids may also be used as long-term control medications. Oral steroids reduce swelling, inflammation, and mucus production in the airways. They help control and prevent symptoms of asthma. Oral steroids can also reduce the “twitchiness” or irritability the airways.

Although oral steroids are used for quick-relief, they:

- **DO NOT** immediately open the airways
- **DO NOT** provide immediate relief of wheezing or acute asthma attacks.

Oral steroids **DO** speed recovery from a moderate to severe asthma episode and reduce the chance of a relapse.

There are other medicines available, which quickly open airways and are used for acute asthma attacks.

### **How is it taken?**

Oral steroids can be taken as pills or syrup. Steroid medicine has a bitter taste. Swallow the pills quickly and do not hold them in your mouth. The syrup also has a bitter taste and is best swallowed quickly. After swallowing, quickly take a drink of another liquid to rinse your mouth. It is best not to take this medicine on an empty stomach.

### **What is the usual dose?**

There is no usual dose of steroids. Your doctor carefully prescribes them for a specific amount of time. In general, when a steroid is prescribed for less than 10 days it is called a “burst” and does not require decreasing doses before stopping the medicine. Steroids taken daily or every other day for over 10 days should not be stopped without checking with your doctor first.

### **What side effects can steroids cause?**

Side effects vary from person to person and depend on how much, how often, and how long the medication is taken. The most common side effect of steroids taken for a short time is an increased appetite. Some people also have more energy, feel a sense well being, and have trouble sleeping. Others may feel sad or irritable.

Side effects of oral steroids taken daily, for long periods of time, and/or at high doses can be serious and may take a long time to go away once the medication is stopped.

### **What special instructions should be followed?**

Always take the prescribed amount for the length of time prescribed. Do not change the dose or stop taking the medicine without checking with your doctor.