

Prednisone for arthritis

Clinical author's note Michael Stewart 19/07/2019: Lodotra® tablets were discontinued in the UK in December 2018. At the time of review there are no branded or generic medicines containing prednisone marketed in the UK. Prednisone may still be available in other countries. This Medicine Leaflet is based on medical information available in the UK at the time of writing. Please also refer to the manufacturer's information supplied with your medicine.

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

Your pharmacist will give you a blue 'Steroid Treatment Card'. Carry this with you at all times.

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

About prednisone

Type of medicine	Corticosteroid
Used for	Rheumatoid arthritis
Also called	Lodotra® (discontinued); Decortin® (Germany)
Available as	Tablets

Prednisone belongs to a group of medicines called corticosteroids. It is sometimes referred to simply as an [oral steroid](#).

[Rheumatoid arthritis \(RA\)](#) causes inflammation, pain, and swelling of joints. Corticosteroids like prednisone are good at reducing inflammation. By doing this, prednisone reduces the swelling and stiffness in the joints affected by RA. This also helps to ease the pain.

Before taking prednisone

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 prednisone it is important that your doctor or pharmacist knows:

- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- 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 has diabetes (diabetes mellitus) or increased eye pressure (glaucoma).
- If you have weakened bones (osteoporosis).
- If you have an underactive thyroid.
- If you have ever had a mental health problem – for example, depression.
- If you have epilepsy.
- If you have had a stomach ulcer or an inflammatory bowel disorder.
- 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 a condition causing muscle weakness, called myasthenia gravis.
 - If you are taking other medicines, including those available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.
 - If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine, or if you have ever developed muscle pain after taking a steroid medicine.
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How to take prednisone

- Before starting this treatment, read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet from inside the pack and be careful to follow any printed instructions you have also been given. The leaflet will give you more information about prednisone 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, as your dose will be adjusted to suit you. You may be asked to take more than one strength of tablet. It is important that you take prednisone exactly as your doctor tells you to.
- 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.
- Continue to take prednisone tablets regularly until your doctor tells you otherwise. You may need to take them for several months, or even longer. Stopping suddenly can cause problems and your doctor may want you to reduce your dose gradually if this is necessary.

Getting the most from your treatment

- 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 prednisone for, 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 prednisone and show them your treatment card.
- 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.
- Prednisone may 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 should see your doctor as soon as possible.
- Some vaccines may not be suitable for you while you are being treated with prednisone. If you need any immunisations, make sure you mention that you are taking a steroid.
- If you need to buy any medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are suitable for you to take with your other medicines.

Can prednisone cause problems?

Along with its useful effects, prednisone can cause unwanted side-effects which your doctor will discuss with you. The benefits of taking prednisone usually outweigh the side-effects; however, they can sometimes be troublesome. Although not everyone experiences side-effects, and some will improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist if you become concerned about any of the following:

Common prednisone side-effects	What can I do if I experience this?
Fluid retention causing swollen feet and ankles	Whenever possible, sit with your feet up
Headache	Drink plenty of water and ask a pharmacist to recommend a suitable painkiller. If the headaches continue, let your doctor know
Feeling tired	If this happens, do not drive and do not use tools or machines until you feel more awake
Muscle weakness	If this continues or gets worse, speak with your doctor
Difficulties sleeping, increased weight	If these become troublesome, speak with your doctor
Long-term treatment with prednisone may cause other unwanted effects	If you have any symptoms which cause you concern, you should arrange to see your doctor for advice

For more information about side-effects which are possible when prednisone is taken long-term, see the separate condition leaflet called [Oral Steroids](#).

How to store prednisone

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

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

Further reading

- [British National Formulary, 77th Edition \(Mar 2019\)](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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Authored by:	Peer Reviewed by: Sid Dajani	
Originally Published: 20/11/2023	Next review date: 27/07/2022	Document ID: doc_28531

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