



# MDwise

*A McLaren Company*

## COPD: Steroids

Steroid (corticosteroid) medicines are one type of controller medicine. They reduce swelling and mucus in your airways. You can inhale these medicines, or take them as a pill or syrup. They may also be given as a shot.

### Inhaled steroids

Inhaled steroid medicines are used with a device (inhaler) that lets you breathe the medicine into your lungs.

Using them may reduce the number of flare-ups, or exacerbations, you have. An exacerbation is when your COPD symptoms suddenly get worse.

Examples of inhaled steroids include:

- Beclomethasone.
- Budesonide.
- Flunisolide.
- Fluticasone.
- Mometasone.

Sometimes a steroid medicine and a different type of medicine (such as a beta2-agonist) are combined into one inhaler.

### How to use your inhaler

A metered-dose inhaler (MDI) provides a puff of medicine as a liquid mist. A dry powder inhaler delivers a dose of medicine as a powder.

- Talk with your doctor to be sure you are using the inhaler the right way. Practicing in front of a mirror may help.



- Make sure you have the correct medicine. If you use several inhalers, put a label on each one so that you know which one to use at the right time.
- Check the label to see how many puffs are in the inhaler. If you know how many puffs you can take, you can get a new inhaler before you run out. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to help you learn how to know how much medicine is left.

**Using a spacer with an MDI** is the best way to get the most medicine to your lungs. **Never use a spacer with a dry powder inhaler.**

### Side effects of inhaled steroids

Ask your pharmacist about the side effects of each medicine you take. Side effects are also listed in the information that comes with your medicine. Common side effects of these

medicines include:

- A sore mouth or sore throat.
- Changes in your voice, such as hoarseness.
- A mouth or throat infection called thrush. Rinsing your mouth after you use your inhaler will help prevent thrush. Do not swallow the rinse.

Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. **Call 911 right away** if you think you are having a serious reaction, such as trouble breathing.

## Oral steroids

Oral steroid medicines are swallowed as pills or a syrup. They are mostly used during an exacerbation, especially if you have a lot of mucus. They include:

- Methylprednisolone.
- Prednisolone.
- Prednisone.

## Side effects of oral steroids

Common side effects of short-term use

include:

- Weight gain and fluid buildup.
- Loss of muscle mass.
- Mood changes.
- High blood pressure.

If you use these medicines for a long time, common side effects include:

- Weak bones, or osteoporosis.
- Infections.
- Cloudy areas in the eye, called cataracts.
- Thin skin that bruises easily.
- Stomach ulcers.

Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine. **Call 911 right away** if you think you are having a serious reaction, such as trouble breathing.



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