

What to expect when starting steroids

Information for patients.

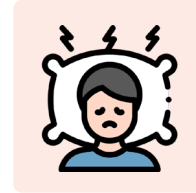
Taking steroids

Steroids are very good at reducing pain and inflammation. When you start taking steroid tablets there may be lots of information to take in. Many patients find that they experience side-effects when taking steroid tablets. Here are three potential side-effects to be aware of:

1. Feeling very hungry



2. Sleep problems



3. Mood changes



Treatment checklist

Here is a checklist of things to ask about your steroid treatment:

- How long will I need to be on steroids for?
- Can I just stop taking the steroids if I have problems with side-effects?
- What should I do at the end of this course of steroids?
- Do I need medicine to protect my bones or my stomach?

If you will be taking steroid tablets for longer than 4 weeks:

- What do I need to do if I am unwell?
- Do I need a steroid emergency card?
- Are there longer-term side-effects that I should know about?

Your healthcare team

Your rheumatology team includes:

- Consultant rheumatologist
- Clinical nurse specialist
- Hospital-based pharmacist
- Physiotherapist
- Occupational therapist

Your primary care team includes:

- Your GP
- Your community pharmacist

Where to find more information and support

If you feel your side-effects are unmanageable and you need help urgently, please contact your GP or call NHS **111**.

Leeds Rheumatology Advice Line (**0113** ) – leave a voicemail with your question and receive a call back, usually within 5 working days.

The charity Versus Arthritis have produced a leaflet with much more information about steroids. This can be found at <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/treatments/drugs/steroids/>, or a paper copy can be provided on request.

Charities and support groups (these organisations can give only information and support, not medical advice):

- Polymyalgia rheumatica and giant cell arteritis: **0300 111 5090** or <https://pmrgca.org.uk/>
 - Vasculitis: **0300 365 0075** or www.vasculitis.org.uk/
 - All forms of arthritis: **0800 5200 520** or <https://www.versusarthritis.org/>
 - Rheumatoid arthritis: **0800 298 7650** or <https://nras.org.uk/>
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