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Prednisolone tablets should be swallowed whole with food or milk to help protect the lining of the stomach.

You will usually be prescribed another drug to reduce the risk of stomach irritation.

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**We appreciate your feedback**

Please fill in a short online survey about our patient information at myeloma.org.uk/pifeedback or email any comments to myelomauk@myeloma.org.uk

For a list of references used to develop our resources, visit myeloma.org.uk/references

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**Prednisolone**

Treatment Guide

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What is prednisolone?
Prednisolone is a steroid drug used in the treatment of myeloma. It belongs to a class of steroids called glucocorticoids.

How does it work?
Prednisolone mimics the action of a naturally occurring hormone produced in the body. It is effective at killing myeloma cells and making anti-myeloma drugs work better. Prednisolone can prevent inflammation which can help to reduce pain associated with myeloma bone disease.

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Possible side effects
Prednisolone has a number of possible side effects which can vary considerably from patient to patient. It is important to report any side effects to your doctor or nurse as soon as possible so they can be treated or managed promptly.

Muscle weakness
You may be affected by muscle weakness particularly towards the end of your prednisolone treatment course. Muscle cramps can also occur for a short time after stopping prednisolone. These effects on muscle are thought to be due to changes in potassium levels.

There are a number of medical and non-medical strategies you may try to help manage muscle cramping. Some non-medical strategies include keeping well hydrated, stretching and drinking tonic water or sports drinks, which anecdotal evidence suggests may help to ease cramping.

Your doctor may prescribe specific treatment which can help prevent or control the symptoms so it is very important to discuss any muscle weakness or cramps with your doctor or nurse.

Mood changes
Prednisolone can cause mood swings, anxiety, tearfulness and irritability. This can be more apparent when taking higher doses and when alternating between periods on and off prednisolone. Prednisolone can also affect your judgement and decision-making skills. If you find your judgement is affected, you should consider whether it is safe for you to drive whilst you are taking prednisolone.

Informing family and friends of such side effects can help them to understand why your behaviour may be changed when you are on prednisolone.

Insomnia
Insomnia or difficulty sleeping at night is a common side effect of prednisolone. This may be minimised by taking prednisolone in the morning, however, the best time to take prednisolone may vary from patient to patient and you may need to adopt a trial and error approach to find out what works best for you.

Increased risk of infection
When given at high doses or long-term, prednisolone can suppress the immune system, which could lead to an increased risk of infection or make infections worse. It is important to tell your doctor or nurse about any signs of infection such as a high temperature, productive cough or any area of swelling or inflammation.

Increased blood sugar
Prednisolone may increase blood sugar levels. This is especially important if you are diabetic, in which case you may require more frequent monitoring of your blood sugar levels and/or changes in insulin or other medications. Levels usually return to normal once prednisolone treatment has stopped.

Fluid retention
Prednisolone can cause excessive fluid to accumulate in the body (oedema) in areas such as the face, hands and feet. Fluid may also collect around the abdomen, making you feel bloated. Occasionally, fluid may collect in the chest leading to a shortness of breath. Treatment for this will usually involve taking diuretics (water tablets) to help your body remove the excessive fluid.

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Stomach pain or indigestion
Prednisolone can damage or irritate the lining of the stomach (gastric irritation) and can sometimes cause stomach ulcers. It is likely that you will be given an antacid (e.g. lanzoprazole, omeprazole), to prevent stomach problems. If you have any stomach pain, or you vomit blood, you must tell your doctor/nurse immediately.
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