





#### Possible side effects of short-term corticosteroid use:

- Upset stomach
- Increased blood sugar
- Increased hunger
- Behavior changes, trouble sleeping, irritability
- Increased risk of pneumonia, thrush (white coating in the mouth), and other infections
- Weight gain, salt and water retention
- High blood pressure
- Increased fat on the face (rounded face), upper back, and belly
- Stretch marks on the skin, acne, poor wound healing, increased and unusual hair growth

#### Possible side effects of long-term use (3 months or longer):

- All short-term side effects
- Poor growth in children (can be severe)
- Brittle bones (bones break easily, problems with hips and shoulder joints)
- Muscle weakness
- Diabetes
- Eye problems

#### What can you do to improve the success of corticosteroid treatment?

- Take steroids exactly as prescribed by your doctor.
- Take steroids in the morning (if prescribed once a day), and take them with food to prevent an upset stomach.
- If you miss a dose of medicine, take it as soon as possible. If it is almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and return to the regular schedule. Do not take a double dose or extra doses.
- Tell your doctor if you get sick. Your blood count might drop from the stress of being sick, and you might need extra doses of medicine or other treatment.
- Always check with your doctor before changing the dose or stopping this medicine. It can be dangerous to stop corticosteroids suddenly. Your doctor may want to slowly reduce the amount you're taking until you stop completely.
- Talk with your doctor about any concerns. Make a list of your questions. Do your research so you can help make decisions about your treatment.

#### Important things to remember:

- Call your doctor if you have a fever of 100.5°F more than once or if you have a fever of 101°F or higher even once. It could be a sign of an infection.
- Tell your doctor about any stomach pains.
- Ask your doctor about vaccinations. People taking a high dose of corticosteroids should not get certain vaccines, such as chicken pox (varicella) and measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR).
- Get a flu shot (not the nose spray vaccine) each year. Everyone living in your home should get a flu shot, too.
- Ask your doctor about taking an extra medicine (called PCP prophylaxis) to avoid getting a certain type of pneumonia.
- Get a vision check every year.
- Ask your doctor about getting a special x-ray, called a bone density scan, when you start taking corticosteroids. This will show the strength of your bones and help your doctor watch for bone loss.
- Ask your doctor about seeing a specialist (called an endocrinologist) to monitor growth and development while taking corticosteroids.
- Be aware that at times of hormone changes, such as puberty or pregnancy, the body's response to corticosteroids may change, and transfusion may be necessary.
- Ask for help. Support can come from friends, family members, doctors and nurses on your medical team, or a support group for people with DBA.

#### Resources

- For answers to your immediate medical questions, you can call the DBA nurse at 1-877-DBA-NURSE (1-877-322-6877).
- To connect with other people and families affected by DBA, visit the DBA Foundation at: <http://www.dbafoundation.org/home.html>
- For additional information and resources, visit the CDC at: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hbd/dba/default.htm>