

# Methylprednisolone

Names	The generic drug name is methylprednisolone (meth il pred nis' oh lone). Brand names include Duralone®, Medralone®, Medrol®, Solu-Medrol®, and M-Prednisol®. There may be other names for this medication.
How is it Administered?	This medicine comes as a tablet to be taken by mouth. It is also available as a powder meant to be mixed with liquid and injected into a muscle (intramuscular or IM injection) or into a vein (IV or intravenous).
Why Am I Taking This Medication?	<p>Methylprednisolone, a corticosteroid, is similar to a natural hormone produced by your adrenal glands. It has many uses in the treatment of cancer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• relieving inflammation (swelling, heat, redness, and pain)</li><li>• treating or preventing allergic reactions</li><li>• treating some types of cancer, such as leukemia and lymphoma</li><li>• treating nausea and vomiting related to chemotherapy</li><li>• prevention and treatment of graft-versus-host disease after an allogeneic bone marrow transplant</li><li>• treating some autoimmune diseases, skin conditions, asthma, and lung conditions</li></ul>
How Does it Work?	Methylprednisolone is a corticosteroid medication that prevents the release of substances in the body that cause inflammation. It can work by replacing steroids that are normally produced naturally by the body. It works to treat other conditions by reducing swelling and redness and by changing the way the immune system works.
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin?	<p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have had an allergic reaction to methylprednisolone or if you have other allergies</li><li>• have a history of ulcers or you take large doses of aspirin or other arthritis medication</li><li>• have tuberculosis (TB); cataracts; glaucoma; Cushing's syndrome; diabetes; high blood pressure; heart failure; a recent heart attack; emotional problems, depression or other types of mental illness; myasthenia gravis, osteoporosis, seizures; ulcers; a fungal infection anywhere other than your skin; or liver, kidney, heart, intestinal, or thyroid disease</li></ul>

- have any type of untreated bacterial, parasitic, or viral infection anywhere in your body or a herpes eye infection
- are taking anticoagulants ('blood thinners') such as warfarin (Coumadin); aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen/Advil®, Motrin®, naproxen/Aleve®, and celecoxib (Celebrex®); arthritis medications, **aspirin**, azithromycin (Zithromax®), clarithromycin (Biaxin®), cyclosporine (Neoral®, Sandimmune®), digoxin (Lanoxin®), diuretics ('water pills'), erythromycin, estrogen (Premarin®), ketoconazole (Nizoral®), oral contraceptives, phenobarbital, phenytoin (Dilantin®), rifampin (Rifadin®), theophylline (Theo-Dur®), or vitamins
- are pregnant or breastfeeding

**This drug may interact with others or cause harmful side effects. To help prevent problems, tell your doctor and pharmacist about your health problems and about all the prescription and over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal/diet supplements you are taking.**

#### What Are Some Possible Side Effects?

- Increased appetite and/or weight gain
- Heartburn, or nausea (Take with food to lessen risk of nausea)
- Sleep problems; mood changes (restlessness, anxiety, depression, irritability); increased or decreased energy; shakiness or tremors
- Swelling in your ankles and feet (fluid retention)
- Muscle weakness
- Slow wound healing, easy bruising
- Increased blood sugar levels (If you have diabetes, you may need to monitor blood sugar more closely and/or adjust your medication)
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Skin changes: acne, increased hair growth
- irregular or absent menstrual periods
- Cataracts and bone thinning (with long-term use)

#### How Can I Manage These Side Effects?

- **Drink 2-3 quarts of water every day unless your doctor tells you to limit your fluids.**
- Take your medication with food or milk to decrease stomach irritation.
- To help prevent nausea, avoid fried, spicy, and fatty foods on the days you receive chemo and for 2-3 days afterwards. Eating small, frequent meals may help. If you have nausea, try foods and drinks that are 'easy on the stomach' - bland foods, ginger ale, dry crackers, and toast.

How Can I Manage These Side Effects?  
(continued)

- Do not use any products on your acne, rash, or skin problems unless approved by your doctor. Keep the area around a rash clean and dry.
- Be careful handling sharp objects, stay away from situations where you could be injured, and use an electric razor.
- If you have diabetes, test your blood or urine more frequently than usual. Call your doctor if your blood sugar is high or if sugar is present in your urine.
- Your doctor may instruct you to follow a low salt (sodium), potassium-rich, or high-protein diet and/or weigh yourself every day.
- Mouth care is very important while taking this drug. Rinse your mouth with a mixture of ½ tsp of baking soda in 8 oz of water after every meal and at bedtime. Brush your teeth and gums often with soft toothbrush. Avoid smoking, alcohol and mouthwashes that contain alcohol.

When Should I Call the Doctor?

**Call 911 or go to the nearest hospital emergency department (ER) if you have life-threatening symptoms** such as:

- signs of severe allergic reaction: Swelling or tingling in your face, tongue, mouth, or throat; chest tightness; wheezing; trouble breathing or swallowing; dizziness, shortness of breath; heart palpitations; or hives.

Please let us know if you go to the ER or are admitted to the hospital.

**Call your doctor immediately if you have:**

- any sign of infection: **Fever of 100.4°F (38°C)** or higher, chills, cough, sore throat, pain or burning upon urination; redness or tenderness along a vein, at an IV site, or at any other wound or skin irritation
- muscle weakness
- unusual bruising or bleeding: bleeding lasts more than 10-15 minutes or that causes dizziness; black or bloody stools; vomit that is bloody or that looks like coffee grounds; blood in your urine or phlegm /mucus, unusually heavy menstrual bleeding, spontaneous bleeding from your gums or nose, or superficial bleeding into the skin that appears as a rash of pinpoint-sized reddish-purple spots (petechiae)

When Should I Call the Doctor?  
(cont)

**Call your doctor as soon as possible if you have:**

- swollen feet, ankles, and lower legs
- eye pain or vision problems
- a cold or infection that lasts a long time
- nausea or pain not relieved by prescribed medication or that prevents you from eating or drinking; weight gain/loss of 5 pounds in a week
- a skin wound that isn't healing or a rash or acne that is bothersome

## What Else Do I Need to Know?

- You may get infections more easily. Stay away from crowds or people with colds, flu, or other infections. Wash your hands often. Talk to your doctor before getting flu shots or other vaccines. Report any injuries or signs of infection (see When to Call Your Doctor) that occur during treatment.
- Stay away from rough sports or other situations where you could be bruised, cut, or injured. Use an electric razor.
- You may be asked to weigh yourself daily – report any weight gain.
- If you are having surgery, including dental surgery, tell the doctor or dentist that you are taking methylprednisolone.
- If you have a history of ulcers or take large doses of aspirin or other arthritis medication, limit or stop drinking alcoholic beverages.

## How to Take Oral Methylprednisolone

- Take methylprednisolone exactly as directed. Do not take more or less of it or take it more often than prescribed by your doctor.
- Do not stop taking methylprednisolone without talking to your doctor. Stopping abruptly can cause loss of appetite, upset stomach, vomiting, drowsiness, confusion, headache, fever, joint and muscle pain, peeling skin, and weight loss. If you take large doses for a long time, your doctor probably will decrease your dose gradually to allow your body to adjust.
- Your doctor may instruct you to follow a low-sodium, low-salt, potassium-rich, or high-protein diet. Follow these directions.
- When you start to take methylprednisolone, ask your doctor what to do if you forget a dose. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.
- Keep this medication in the container it came in, tightly closed, and store it at room temperature and away from excess heat and moisture (not in the bathroom). Throw away any medication that is outdated or no longer needed.
- Carry an identification card that indicates that you may need to take supplementary doses of methylprednisolone during periods of stress (injuries, infections, and severe asthma attacks). Ask your doctor how to obtain this card.
- If you have any additional questions, talk to your doctor or pharmacist