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## Introduction to Steroids

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Steroids (short for **corticosteroids**) are synthetic **drugs** that closely resemble cortisol, a hormone that your body produces naturally. Steroids work by decreasing inflammation and reducing the activity of the immune system. Corticosteroids are different from **anabolic steroids**, which some athletes use to build bigger muscles. Examples of **corticosteroid** medications include triamcinolone, cortisone, **prednisone**, and **triamcinolone acetonide**.

## How Are Steroids Given?

Steroids can be given topically (cream or ointment), by mouth (orally), or by injection. When injected, they can be given into a vein or muscle, directly into a joint or bursa (lubricating sac between bones).

## How Do Steroids Work?

Steroids decrease inflammation and reduce the activity of the immune system. Inflammation is a process by which the body's white blood cells and chemicals protect the body against infection. In certain diseases, however, the body's defense system (immune system) doesn't function properly and is overactive. This may cause inflammation to work against the body's own tissues and cause damage. Steroids reduce the production of inflammatory chemicals in order to minimize tissue damage. Steroids also reduce the activity of the immune system by affecting the function of white blood cells.



### Side Effect of Steroids to Treat Arthritis

Acne

No one factor causes acne. Acne occurs when sebaceous (oil) glands attached to the hair follicles are stimulated at the time of puberty or due to other hormonal changes. Sebum (oil) is a natural substance that lubricates and protects the skin. Associated with the hair follicle is a bump. As the follicle enlarges, the wall may rupture, allowing irritating substances and normal skin bacteria access into the deeper layers of the skin, ultimately producing inflammation. Inflammation near the skin's surface produces a pustule.

Some medications may cause or worsen acne, such as those containing iodides, bromides, or oral or injected steroids (either the medically prescribed prednisone [Deltasone, Orasone, Prednicen-M, Liquid Pred] or the steroids that bodybuilders or athletes use).

[Read more about acne »](#)

## What Conditions Are Treated With Steroids?

Steroids are used to treat a variety of conditions in which the body's defense system malfunctions and causes tissue damage. Steroids are used as the main treatment for certain inflammatory c

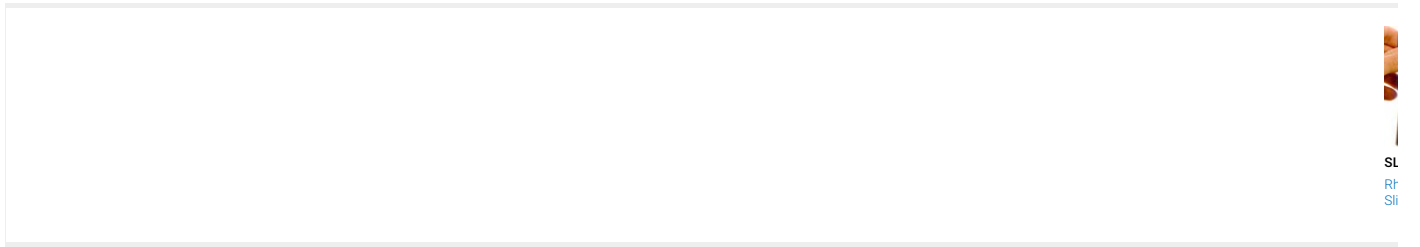
## What Are the Benefits of Steroids?

When inflammation threatens to damage critical body organs, steroids can be organ saving and, in many instances, life-saving. For example, they may help prevent the progression of kidney infla



Low doses of steroids may provide significant relief from [pain](#)  and stiffness for people with conditions including [rheumatoid arthritis](#) . Temporary use of higher doses of steroids may help :

## Why Are Steroids Injected?

Injecting steroids into one or two areas of inflammation allows doctors to deliver a high dose of the drug directly to the problem area. When doctors give steroids by mouth or IV, they cannot be s



## What Conditions Are Treated With Steroid Injections?

Steroids often are injected directly into joints to treat conditions such as [rheumatoid arthritis](#) , [gout](#) , or other inflammatory diseases. They also can be injected into an inflamed bursa or aro

Some people report relief from [osteoarthritis](#) when steroids are injected directly into swollen or [painful joints](#).

## What Are the Expected Benefits of Steroid Injections?

Steroid injections into a specific area are generally well tolerated and are less likely than other forms of steroid drugs to produce serious side effects. Also, the injections may help avoid the need

## What Role Do Steroid Injections Play in an Overall Treatment Program?

Steroid injections can be added to a treatment program that may already include anti-inflammatory pain medications ([NSAIDs](#)), physical therapy, occupational therapy, or supportive devices such

For example, in an otherwise healthy person, tendinitis may be adequately treated with only a steroid injection into the inflamed area. However, in a person with [rheumatoid arthritis](#), injections are

## When Should Steroid Injections Not Be Used?

Steroids should not be injected when there is infection in the area to be targeted or even elsewhere in the body because they could inhibit the natural infection-fighting immune response. Also, if

If someone has a potential bleeding problem or is taking [anticoagulants](#) (often referred to as blood thinners), steroid injections may cause bleeding at the site. For these people, injections are giv

Frequent steroid injections, more often than every three or four months, are not recommended because of an increased risk of weakening tissues in the treated area.



## What Are the Side Effects of Steroid Injections?

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Steroid injections are one of the most effective ways to decrease pain and improve function, yet they generally do not cure the illness.

In rare instances, the following side effects might occur:

- Infection
- [Allergic](#) reactions

- Bleeding into the joint
- Rupture of a tendon
- Skin discoloration
- Weakening of bone, ligaments, and tendons (from frequent, repeated injections into the same area)

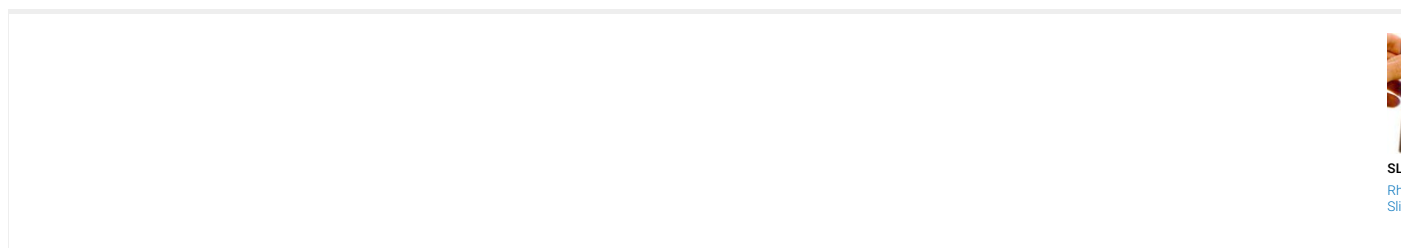
Not everyone will develop side effects and side effects vary from person to person. If steroid injections are infrequent (less than every three to four months), it is possible that none of the listed s

## What Are the Possible Side Effects of Oral Steroids?

Side effects are more common with a higher dose and longer treatment. Side effects are much more common with oral drugs. Some side effects are more serious than others. Common side effi

- Acne
- Blurred vision
- Cataracts or glaucoma
- Easy bruising
- Difficulty sleeping
- High blood pressure
- Increased appetite, weight gain
- Increased growth of body hair
- Insomnia
- Lower resistance to infection
- Muscle weakness
- Nervousness, restlessness
- Osteoporosis
- Stomach irritation or bleeding
- Sudden mood swings
- Swollen, puffy face
- Water retention, swelling
- Worsening of diabetes

**Please note:** The side effects listed are the most common side effects. All possible side effects are not included. Always contact your doctor if you have questions about your personal situation.





## Does Everyone Develop Side Effects of Steroids?

No. How often any side effect occurs varies from person to person. If steroid use is brief (from a few days to a few weeks), it is possible that none of the listed side effects will occur. The side ef  
However, if steroid use involves high doses and is prolonged (for a few months to several years), an increase in the number of side effects may occur.

## How Can Steroid Side Effects Be Minimized?





To minimize the side effects of steroids, doctors follow these guidelines:

- Use steroids only when necessary.
- Monitor closely to detect the development of serious side effects.
- If possible, use steroid injections for problems in a specific area.
- Use the minimal dose required to gain control of the disease.
- Reduce the dose gradually if the disease remains under control.

- Monitor [blood pressure](#)  often and treat if necessary.
- Recommend [calcium supplements](#), [vitamin D](#), and bone-building prescription medications to help maintain bone strength (this is done especially if steroids will be taken for a long period of
- Have your [bone density](#)  checked every one to two years.

## Who Should Not Take Steroids?

Steroids, as with other drugs, are not recommended for everyone. In general, people with the following conditions should not take steroids:

- Infection
- Uncontrolled [diabetes](#) 
- Uncontrolled [high blood pressure](#)  or [congestive heart failure](#)
- [Peptic ulcer](#)
- [Osteoporosis](#)  (bone thinning)
- [Glaucoma](#) 


## How Do I Know If Steroid Treatment Is Right for Me?

The decision to prescribe steroids is always made on an individual basis. Your doctor will consider your age, your overall health, and other drugs you are taking. Your doctor also will make sure y

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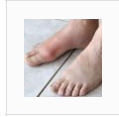
### Arthritis

Arthritis is inflammation of one or more joints. When joints are inflamed they can develop stiffness, warmth, swelling, redness and pain. There are over 100 types of arthritis, including osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, gout, and pseudogout.



### Cortisone Injection

Cortisone injections are used to treat small areas of inflammation or widespread inflammation throughout the body. There is minimal pain from these injections, and relief from the pain of inflammation occurs rapidly.



### Gout (Gouty Arthritis)

Buildup of uric acid crystals in a joint causes gouty arthritis. Symptoms and signs include joint pain, swelling, heat, and redness, typically of a single joint. Gout may be treated with diet and lifestyle changes, as well as medication.



### methylprednisolone

Methylprednisolone (Medrol, Depo-Medrol, Solu-Medrol) is a medication prescribed to patients to suppress inflammation from a variety of conditions and diseases. Side effects, drug interactions, dosage, and pregnancy to taking this medication.



### Osteoarthritis Picture

Osteoarthritis is a type of arthritis that is caused by the breakdown and eventual loss of the cartilage of one or more joints. See a picture of Osteoarthritis and learn more about the health topic.



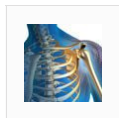
### prednisone

Prednisone is a drug that belongs to the corticosteroid drug class, and is an anti-inflammatory and immune system suppressant. It's used to treat a variety of diseases and conditions, for example: inflammatory bowel disease. Common side effects are weight gain, headache, fluid retention, and muscle weakness. Other effects and adverse events include glaucoma, cataracts, obesity, facial hair growth, moon face, and growth retardation in children.



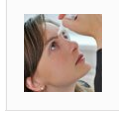
### Rheumatoid Arthritis

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is an autoimmune disease that causes chronic inflammation of the joints, the tissue around the joints, as well as other organs in the body. Because it can affect multiple other organs of the body, it is called rheumatoid disease.



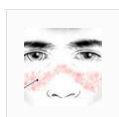
### Sacroiliac Joint Pain

Sacroiliac joint (SI) dysfunction is a general term to reflect pain in the SI joints. Causes of SI joint pain include osteoarthritis, abnormal walking pattern, and disorders that can cause SI joint inflammation including cortisone injections, and surgery.



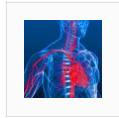
### Sjogren's Syndrome

Sjögren's syndrome is an autoimmune disease involving the abnormal production of extra antibodies that attack the glands and connective tissue. Sjögren's syndrome with gland inflammation (resulting dry eyes and dry mouth). Though there is no cure for Sjögren's syndrome, the symptoms may be treated by using lubricating eye ointments, drinking plenty of water, humidifying the air, and using glycerin swabs. Medications are also used.



### Systemic Lupus

Systemic lupus erythematosus is a condition characterized by chronic inflammation of body tissues caused by autoimmune disease. Lupus can cause disease of the skin, heart, lungs, kidneys, joints, and nervous system. Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE).

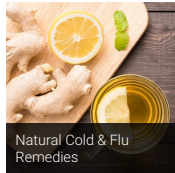


### Vasculitis

Vasculitis (arteritis, angiitis) is a general term for a group of uncommon diseases which feature inflammation of the blood vessels. Each form of vasculitis has its own characteristic pattern of symptoms. The diagnosis depends on the function of affected organs.



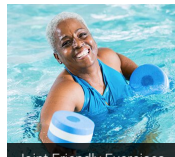
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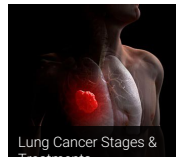
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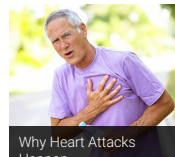
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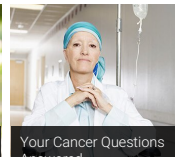
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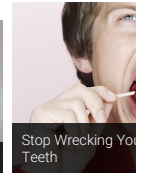
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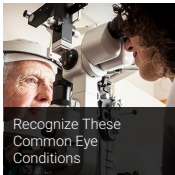
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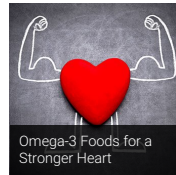
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