

Side Effects of Steroids

Steroids are like the hormones your body makes at times of stress. When given as medicine, steroids can help reduce swelling and fatigue, improve appetite, and more.

There are many types of steroids. These are some common names: dexamethasone, prednisone, methylprednisolone, and hydrocortisone.

Steroids may have side effects based on how long you take them. Your doctor will try to give steroids for the shortest time possible to help with your symptoms.

The lists below show the most common side effects from steroids given over a short amount of time (one month or less) and a long amount of time (more than one month).

Side Effects	Self-Care Tips
Common Short-Term Side Effects	
More hungry	Continue to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
Trouble Sleeping	If you take a steroid once a day, take it in the morning. If you take a steroid twice a day, take one in the morning and then one in the afternoon, no later than 5 p.m.
Heartburn	Take with a snack or food. Your doctor can also prescribe a drug to help prevent heartburn.
Hiccups	Your doctor may decrease your dose or prescribe a drug to relax the muscle that causes hiccups.
High blood sugar	Your care team may check your blood sugar during each clinic visit. If you have diabetes, your doctor may need to change the dose or type of drugs you take to control your diabetes.
High blood pressure	Your care team will check your blood pressure during each clinic visit. If you already have high blood pressure, your doctor may need to change the dose or type of drugs you take to control it.
Changes in mood	Steroids can make you feel restless or moody. Being active such as going for a walk can help. Let your doctor know if changes in mood seem to be too much.
Common Long-Term Side Effects	
Infection	Steroids can make your immune system weak over time, which increases risk of infections. Your doctor may recommend you get a flu shot every year. You may also be prescribed a drug to help prevent a type of lung infection.
Osteoporosis (weak bones)	Your doctor may recommend you take an over-the-counter calcium and vitamin D supplement daily.
Changes in vision	You should make an appointment with your eye doctor once a year while on steroids.
Muscle weakness	Major muscle weakness can happen if you are on steroids for a long time. Stay as active as you can each day. Exercising 30 minutes each day can help keep your muscles and bones strong.
Round "moon face"	Your face may develop a moon-like shape due to extra fat buildup. Tell your doctor if this bothers you.
Swelling in legs or feet	Your doctor may recommend wearing compression stockings. Tell your doctor if you have swelling that bothers you.