Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Methylprednisolone (Systemic

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

DEPO-Medrol; Medrol; SOLU-Medrol

Brand Names: Canada

Depo-Medrol; Medrol; Solu-MEDROL; SOLU-Medrol (PF)

What is this drug used for?

- It is used for many health problems like allergy signs, asthma, adrenal gland problems, blood problems, skin rashes, or swelling problems. This is not a list of all health problems that this drug may be used for. Talk with the doctor.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

All products:

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have an infection. This includes bacterial, viral, and fungal infections; amoeba infection (like traveler's diarrhea); herpes infection of the eye; malaria infection in the brain; threadworm infestation; or any other infection.
- If you have nerve problems in the eye.

Injection (if given in the muscle):

- If you have idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP).

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have your blood work, body weight, and other lab tests checked as you have been told if you take this drug for a long time. You may also need to have your eye pressure and bone density checked.
- High blood pressure has happened with drugs like this one. Have your blood pressure checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- This drug may affect allergy skin tests. Be sure your doctor and lab workers know you take this drug.
- Long-term use may raise the chance of cataracts or glaucoma. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause weak bones (osteoporosis) with long-term use. Talk with your doctor to see if you have a higher chance of weak bones or if you have any questions.
- You may need to lower how much salt is in your diet and take extra potassium. Talk with your doctor.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your blood sugar closely.

- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.
- Chickenpox and measles can be very bad or even deadly in some people taking steroid drugs like this drug. Avoid being near anyone with chickenpox or measles if you have not had these health problems before. If you have been exposed to chickenpox or measles, talk with your doctor.
- Steroid drugs, including this one, raise the risk of infection. They can cause an active infection to get worse. They can also make some signs of infection harder to notice. Infections that happen with steroids can be mild, but they can also be severe and even deadly. The risk of problems from these infections is usually raised with higher doses of steroids. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu. Tell your doctor if you have any signs of an infection.
- Some infections may become active again in patients taking drugs like this one. This includes tuberculosis and hepatitis B. Tell your doctor if you have ever had one of these infections.
- This drug lowers how much natural steroid your body makes. Tell your doctor if you have fever, infection, surgery, or injury. Your body's normal response to these stresses may be affected. You may need extra doses of steroid.
- Do not stop taking this drug all of a sudden without calling your doctor. You may have a greater risk of side effects. If you need to stop this drug, you will want to slowly stop it as ordered by your doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you have missed a dose or recently stopped this drug and you feel very tired, weak, or shaky, or have a fast heartbeat, confusion, sweating, or dizziness.
- A type of cancer (Kaposi's sarcoma) has happened in people taking drugs like this one for a long time. Talk with the doctor.
- Patients with cancer may be at greater risk of getting a bad and sometimes

deadly health problem called tumor lysis syndrome (TLS). Talk with the doctor.

- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may lower sperm counts. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.
- Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about any risks to your baby.
- If you used this drug when you were pregnant, tell your baby's doctor.

Injection:

- Very bad health problems have happened when drugs like this one have been given into the spine (epidural). These include paralysis, loss of eyesight, stroke, and sometimes death. It is not known if drugs like this one are safe and effective when given into the spine. These drugs are not approved for this use. Talk with the doctor.
- Some products have benzyl alcohol. If possible, avoid products with benzyl alcohol in newborns or infants. Serious side effects can happen in these children with some doses of benzyl alcohol, including if given with other drugs that have benzyl alcohol. Talk with the doctor to see if this product has benzyl alcohol in it.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Signs of Cushing's syndrome like weight gain in the upper back or belly, moon face, severe headache, or slow healing.
- Signs of a weak adrenal gland like a severe upset stomach or throwing up, severe dizziness or passing out, muscle weakness, feeling very tired, mood changes, decreased appetite, or weight loss.
- Signs of low potassium levels like muscle pain or weakness, muscle cramps, or a heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Signs of a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of high blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Skin changes (pimples, stretch marks, slow healing, hair growth).
- Purple, red, blue, brown, or black bumps or patches on the skin or in the mouth.

- Chest pain or pressure.
- Fast, slow, or abnormal heartbeat.
- Period (menstrual) changes.
- Bone or joint pain.
- Change in eyesight.
- Mental, mood, or behavior changes that are new or worse.
- Seizures.
- A burning, numbness, or tingling feeling that is not normal.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Severe stomach pain.
- Black, tarry, or bloody stools.
- Throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds.
- Muscle weakness that is new or worse.
- This drug may cause you to swell or keep fluid in your body. Tell your doctor if you have swelling, weight gain, dry cough, chest pain, or trouble breathing.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Restlessness.
- Sweating a lot.
- Flushing.
- Headache.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

Tablets:

- Take in the morning if taking once a day.
- Take with food.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Injection:

- It is given as a shot.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Tablets:

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Injection:

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

Tablets:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or

get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2026-01-16

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Methylprednisolone (Systemic - Last updated on December 12, 2022
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