

# DrugFAQs

## Medrol Dosepak

Generic Name: methylprednisolone

Brand Names: *Medrol, Medrol Dosepak, MethylPREDNISolone Dose Pack*

### What is Medrol Dosepak?

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Methylprednisolone is in a class of drugs called steroids. Methylprednisolone prevents the release of substances in the body that cause inflammation. Methylprednisolone is used to treat many different conditions such as allergic disorders, skin conditions, ulcerative colitis, arthritis, lupus, psoriasis, or breathing disorders. Methylprednisolone may also be used for other purposes not listed in this medication guide.

### What is the most important information I should know about Medrol Dosepak?

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You should not use this medication if you are allergic to methylprednisolone, or if you have a fungal infection anywhere in your body. Before taking methylprednisolone, tell your doctor about all of your medical conditions, and about all other medicines you are using. There are many other diseases that can be affected by steroid use, and many other medicines that can interact with steroids. Your steroid medication needs may change if you have any unusual stress such as a serious illness, fever or infection, or if you have surgery or a medical emergency. Tell your doctor about any such situation that affects you during treatment. Steroid medication can weaken your immune system, making it easier for you to get an infection or worsening an infection you already have or have recently had. Tell your doctor about any illness or infection you have had within the past several weeks. Avoid being near people who are sick or have infections. Call your doctor for preventive treatment if you are exposed to chicken pox or measles. These conditions can be serious or even fatal in people who are using steroid medication. Do not receive a "live" vaccine while you are taking methylprednisolone. Vaccines may not work as well while you are taking a steroid. Do not stop using methylprednisolone suddenly, or you could have unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. Talk to your doctor about how to avoid withdrawal symptoms when stopping the medication. Carry an ID card or wear a medical alert bracelet stating that you are taking a steroid, in case of emergency.

## What should I discuss with my healthcare provider before taking Medrol Dosepak?

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You should not use this medication if you are allergic to methylprednisolone, or if you have a fungal infection anywhere in your body. Steroid medication can weaken your immune system, making it easier for you to get an infection. Steroids can also worsen an infection you already have, or reactivate an infection you recently had. Before taking this medication, tell your doctor about any illness or infection you have had within the past several weeks. Other medical conditions you should tell your doctor about before taking methylprednisolone include:

- liver disease (such as cirrhosis);
- kidney disease;
- a thyroid disorder;
- diabetes;
- a history of malaria;
- tuberculosis;
- osteoporosis;
- a muscle disorder such as myasthenia gravis;
- glaucoma or cataracts;
- herpes infection of the eyes;
- stomach ulcers, ulcerative colitis, or diverticulitis;
- depression or mental illness;
- congestive heart failure; or
- high blood pressure

If you have any of these conditions, you may need a dose adjustment or special tests to safely take methylprednisolone. FDA pregnancy category C. This medication may be harmful to an unborn baby. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant during treatment.

Methylprednisolone can pass into breast milk and may harm a nursing baby. Do not use this medication without telling your doctor if you are breast-feeding a baby. Steroids can affect growth in children. Talk with your doctor if you think your child is not growing at a normal rate while using this medication.

## How should I take Medrol Dosepack?

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Take this medication exactly as it was prescribed for you. Do not take the medication in larger amounts, or take it for longer than recommended by your doctor. Follow the directions on your prescription label. Your doctor may occasionally change your dose to make sure you get the best results from this medication. Your steroid medication needs may change if you have unusual stress such as a serious illness, fever or infection, or if you have surgery or a medical emergency. Tell your doctor about any such situation that affects you. This medication can cause you to have unusual results with certain medical tests. Tell any doctor who treats you that you are using methylprednisolone. Do not stop using methylprednisolone suddenly, or you could have unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. Talk to your doctor about how to avoid withdrawal symptoms when stopping the medication. Carry an ID card or wear a medical alert bracelet stating that you are taking a steroid, in case of emergency. Any doctor, dentist, or emergency medical care provider who treats you should know that you are taking steroid medication. Store methylprednisolone at room temperature away from moisture and heat.

## What happens if I miss a dose?

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If you miss a dose or forget to take your medicine, contact your doctor or pharmacist for instructions.

## What happens if I overdose?

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Seek emergency medical attention if you think you have received too much of this medicine. An overdose of methylprednisolone is not expected to produce life-threatening symptoms. However, long-term use of high steroid doses can lead to symptoms such as thinning skin, easy bruising, changes in the shape or location of body fat (especially in your face, neck, back, and waist), increased acne or facial hair, menstrual problems, impotence, or loss of interest in sex.

## What should I avoid while taking Medrol Dosepak?

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Avoid being near people who are sick or have infections. Call your doctor for preventive treatment if you are exposed to chicken pox or measles. These conditions can be serious or even fatal in people who are using steroid

medication. Do not receive a "live" vaccine while you are being treated with methylprednisolone. Vaccines may not work as well while you are taking a steroid. Avoid drinking alcohol while you are taking methylprednisolone.

### **Medrol Dosepak side effects**

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Get emergency medical help if you have any of these signs of an allergic reaction: hives; difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat. Call your doctor at once if you have any of these serious side effects:

- problems with your vision;
- swelling, rapid weight gain, feeling short of breath;
- severe depression, unusual thoughts or behavior, seizure (convulsions);
- bloody or tarry stools, coughing up blood;
- pancreatitis (severe pain in your upper stomach spreading to your back, nausea and vomiting, fast heart rate);
- low potassium (confusion, uneven heart rate, extreme thirst, increased urination, leg discomfort, muscle weakness or limp feeling); or
- dangerously high blood pressure (severe headache, blurred vision, buzzing in your ears, anxiety, confusion, chest pain, shortness of breath, uneven heartbeats, seizure).

Less serious side effects may include:

- sleep problems (insomnia), mood changes;
- acne, dry skin, thinning skin, bruising or discoloration;
- slow wound healing;
- increased sweating;
- headache, dizziness, spinning sensation;
- nausea, stomach pain, bloating; or
- changes in the shape or location of body fat (especially in your arms, legs, face, neck, breasts, and waist).

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Tell your doctor about any unusual or bothersome side effect.

## **What other drugs will affect Medrol Dosepak (methylprednisolone)?**

There are many other medicines that can interact with steroids. Below is only a partial list of these medicines:

- aspirin (taken on a daily basis or at high doses);
- a diuretic (water pill);
- a blood thinner such as warfarin (Coumadin);
- cyclosporine (Gengraf, Neoral, Sandimmune);
- insulin or diabetes medications you take by mouth;
- antibiotics such as ketoconazole (Nizoral), rifampin (Rifadin, Rifater, Rifamate, Rimactane), or troleandomycin (Tao); or
- seizure medications such as phenytoin (Dilantin) or phenobarbital (Luminal, Solfoton).