



North Shore Eye Centre

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STEROID TABLETS

What is a steroid?

Steroid tablets are any of several compounds with characteristic ring systems, which affect the body and its functions. Steroids are usually produced in our body in small amounts. As medicine they are supplied in larger amounts.

The word steroid is usually used to refer to corticosteroids. Synthetic steroids are used to treat eye diseases, arthritis and some blood disorders.

Steroids are a very strong medication and it is important to follow your ophthalmologist's orders exactly concerning how and when you take the medication. Do not stop the medication suddenly as it might result in severe or life threatening side effects.

Steroids contain hormones which affect the body and its functions. To decrease side effects you should watch your diet to limit weight gain and salt intake. Tablets are best taken with a meal to decrease stomach irritation. It is also recommended to do regular exercise to maintain muscle strength. Take the steroids after breakfast or in the morning.

When taking steroids you should always keep a note of what and when your prescription should be taken.

What are the side effects?

You may experience side effects when taking steroid tablets. Some of them are only annoying and will only occur after taking steroids for an extended period of time:

- Gaining weight
- Rounding of the face
- Increased appetite
- Weakness
- Fluid retention
- Increased frequency of urination
- Menstrual irregularations



- Loss of sexual drive
- Mood changes
- Nervous headaches
- Irregular heartbeats
- Tingling
- Ache
- Bruising of the skin
- Joint pain
- Increased hair growth
- Wounds may heal slowly

Other side effects are very serious, such as:

- Black tarry stools and/or abdominal pain (which may indicate a bleeding ulcer in the stomach)
- Cataracts
- Glaucoma
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Stomach ulcers
- Hip joint degeneration
- Osteoporosis (bone thinning)

Never stop taking corticosteroids (steroid tablets) without consulting your doctor as you might get other side effects such as:

- Diarrhoea
- Tiredness
- Joint aches
- Fever
- Light-headedness
- Lack of appetite

Remember, steroids can be of great benefit and are necessary for treating many eye diseases. However if you develop any complications while taking steroids you should alert your doctor immediately.