



Inhaled Corticosteroid Safety Information for Adults

Inhaled corticosteroid agents are very important in the treatment of respiratory conditions such as asthma and sometimes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). They act by reducing inflammation and preventing symptoms from developing. Corticosteroid sprays are also used for nasal conditions such as sinusitis and hayfever. Generally, they are very safe and free from serious side effects when used in standard doses.

Inhaled corticosteroids can cause local side effects such as sore throat, hoarse voice or oral thrush (sore white patches in the mouth). The risk of these side effects may be reduced by using a spacer device with aerosol inhalers (MDI's) that contain corticosteroids, and rinsing your mouth out with water (and spitting out) after using any corticosteroid inhaler. Prolonged use of inhaled corticosteroids may lead to easy bruising or thinning of the skin, especially in older people. Very rarely, higher doses of inhaled corticosteroids may temporarily reduce your body's ability to produce its own corticosteroids when under stress, such as in severe illness or undergoing surgery. This means you may be more susceptible to infections or less able to fight off some infections (e.g. chickenpox).

If you become ill for any reason, be sure to alert the medical staff looking after you that you are using higher doses of inhaled corticosteroid as you may need additional corticosteroids. Ideally carry the safety card given to you with this information sheet at all times and show this to your medical team. Recorded on the safety card are any inhaled corticosteroids that you should be currently taking.

If you start to experience any of these symptoms: worsening fatigue, muscle weakness, loss of appetite, unintentional weight loss, dizziness, unexplained nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, go and see your general practitioner (GP), because they might be related to the inhaled corticosteroid you are taking. Do not stop taking your inhaled corticosteroid suddenly. If you have never had chickenpox, you should avoid close contact with people who have chickenpox or shingles. If you do come into contact with someone with these conditions, see your doctor urgently.

