

Oral Steroid Taper Information Sheet

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<http://www.ulcerativecolitis.org.uk/information sheets>

Overview

Steroids are commonly used to treat Ulcerative Colitis and work by suppressing inflammation. Steroid medication is a more powerful version of chemicals created by your own body. Because of this your body reduces its own production of steroids and becomes dependent on the steroid medication.

Oral Steroids

When reducing/tapering oral steroids it is important to do it in a controlled manner over a period of time. It is also important to reduce the dose more slowly as the dose gets lower. This allows your body to re-start its own production – something that mainly takes place somewhere between 10mg and finishing steroids.

Body Signals/Illness

It is also important that you “Read” the signals from your body during the steroid reduction. You may have to reduce the dose more slowly than in the table below if you for example have an infection – or are affected by stressful circumstances. It is usually better to delay the next reduction if in doubt. If you don’t feel ready for the next level reduction within a couple weeks you should probably seek advice from your consultant or GP.

Seeking Medical Advice

You should always consult your GP or Consultant before starting the steroid reduction process.

The Key Observations

During Taper the following signs need to be looked out for. They may indicate that the rate of taper needs to be adjusted – or other factors such as diet and hydration need addressing.

Observation	Details	Reasons
Blood/Mucous	Do you have blood or mucous in your stools?	This indicates you still have a flare up
Bowel Movements	More than three bowel movements a day/ liquid loose movements	This indicates the colitis is either fairly active – or you have a diet or hydration issue.
Pain	Have you any pain – particularly towards the lower left side of your abdomen?	Occasional pain is to be expected. If the pain is frequent or severe it may indicate you are about to flare up again
Infection	Have you had a recent infection such as a cold/sore throat?	Infections will inflame colitis.
Injury	Have you had a recent injury?	Injuries cause extra inflammation. If your immune system reacts to this it may cause you to flare again.
Hydration	Do you feel thirsty? Is your urine yellow?	This indicates dehydration. This needs to be corrected.
Food remains	Are there identifiable remains of food in your stools?	This may be caused by inappropriate diet.

Resources

Steroid Taper Tracking Sheet
Steroid Taper Checks Sheet