

Pharmacy Spotlight: Corticosteroids

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff

- **Medication type:**

Prescription only corticosteroid hormones. They may be single formulas or mixed with other medication such as antibiotics.

- **Active ingredient:**

Corticosteroids, also known as Glucocorticoids (not the same as body-building steroids).

- **Dosage form:**

Injectable solutions, tablets, and topical preparations such as creams, ointments, or skin preparations.

- **Drug names:**

Hydrocortisone, Prednisone, Prednisolone, Dexamethasone (Aziium), Betamethasone (Betasone), Triamcinolone (Vetalog), Methylated Prednisolone (Cortisate-20 and Depo-Medrol).

- **Manufacturer:**

Various

- **Major use:**

Controls/eliminates inflammation and suppresses allergic and autoimmune responses.

- **How it works:**

Corticosteroids inhibit the processes involved in inflammatory and immune responses and decrease the body's natural response against itself or outside stimuli. These hormones also occur naturally in the body. When taken daily for more than a few weeks, the body becomes accustomed to the increased levels of corticosteroids and begins to make less of its natural corticosteroids. If high doses of corticosteroids are taken daily and then stopped too quickly, the body does not have time to adjust, and dangerous side effects can occur.

Corticosteroids SUCCESS STORY:

Dog's Name: Hercules

Breed: Miniature Dachshund

Age: 5 years

His story: Every fall, Hercules had bad allergies and this year he was scratching himself until he was bleeding. His hair was falling out and his behavior had changed dramatically. It was obvious that he was uncomfortable. Antihistamines were not controlling the symptoms. His veterinarian prescribed [Prednisone](#) which Hercules took twice a day for 5 days, once a day 5 days, and then every other day for about a month. The veterinarian also explained that the medication, especially at first, may have side effects, and they may notice that

Hercules was hungrier and thirstier than normal, and that he urinated more often. He also cautioned them to follow the prescription directions exactly.

After a week of therapy, Hercules was feeling much better and his skin was starting to heal. He was tapered off of the medication at the end of the fall allergy season, and he was doing great.

Outcome: Hercules' symptoms totally disappeared during the winter. He is playful and happy and his behavior returned to normal. His hair has grown back and his skin looks healthy. Next year his veterinarian plans to start Hercules on Omega-3 fatty acids several months before the allergy season. They plan on using antihistamines at first next year, and using Prednisone again if it is necessary.

For full details on this medication, [download the free patient information sheet](#).