

Methylprednisolone treatment



What is methylprednisolone treatment?

Methylprednisolone is a steroid drug used to treat or reduce the inflammation of your optic disc, which is located at the back of your eye. Methylprednisolone is usually the drug of choice to treat patients with optic neuritis and giant cell arteritis. It is mixed with sterile fluid to be given as an intravenous (IV) infusion which means directly into the vein using a plastic needle called a cannula.

What happens during methylprednisolone treatment?

- If you require intravenous methylprednisolone you will be admitted to Ward 8. Treatment is usually as a day patient and should only require an admission of one to two hours. The doctor will decide the times for your treatment which may be every day for three days or once a week for several weeks.
- A medical history and blood samples will be taken on each admission. You will require the insertion of an intravenous cannula. If your treatment is over three days you will go home with this in place. This is bandaged after each infusion and removed after your last infusion has finished. If your treatment is once a week you will need to have a new IV inserted for each admission. You must tell the nurse if the intravenous cannula becomes uncomfortable or sore.
- Once the infusion of methylprednisolone commences, a nurse carries out observations once every 30 minutes, including a blood sugar level at the commencement and completion of the infusion.
- Occasionally medication is administered for reflux, a condition which can irritate the lining of the stomach, causing acid in the stomach to rise up into the oesophagus.
- While the infusion is in progress you are allowed to eat and drink and it is recommended that you do have something to eat which can help prevent reflux. The hospital will provide food and drinks for you. You should also reduce your intake of acidic foods and drinks.
- During the infusion you may experience a metallic taste, this is normal.
- At some stage either during or after the treatment, you may be required to have a Magnetic Resonating Imaging (MRI) scan, which is usually carried out at St Vincent's Hospital.
- Your nurse will confirm if a referral letter has been received by St Vincent's and may be able to organise an appointment for you, otherwise St Vincent's will call you directly.
- On the last day of your treatment a follow up appointment will be arranged and you may be given a script to commence oral prednisolone tablets the following day. Prednisolone is another steroid drug which will continue to reduce the inflammation around your optic nerve.



What can I do during my methylprednisolone treatment?

- It is recommended that a carer brings you to and from the hospital. Using public transport is not advised.
- The Eye and Ear recommends a carer stays with you overnight throughout the duration of the treatment.
- Ask your doctor if you are able to continue working during your treatment.

What are the side effects?

The side effects of steroid drugs become more common with high dosage or long term use. Please tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist immediately if you notice any of the following:

- continuous stomach pain
- swollen ankles
- irregular heartbeat
- changes in vision
- changes in mood
- difficulty sleeping
- dizziness or fainting
- skin colour changes.

What precautions should I take?

- Do not drive or operate heavy machinery as methylprednisolone may cause dizziness, light-headedness, tiredness or drowsiness in some people.
- Do not drink alcohol as dizziness and light-headedness may become worse.
- Please inform your doctor if you are currently breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. Like most corticosteroid medications, methylprednisolone is not recommended while you are breastfeeding.
- Tell your GP you are having methylprednisolone therapy before you have any vaccinations or immunisations.
- If you are required to have any laboratory tests (eg blood or urine tests) tell the doctor you are having methylprednisolone.
- Try to avoid catching an infection by staying away from people with colds as much as you can. Methylprednisolone may increase the likelihood of an infection and may mask or hide the symptoms of an infection.

If you have any other concerns or questions, please speak to your nurse or doctor or call the Eye and Ear on 03 9929 8666.

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