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USE OF STEROIDS IN ENT PRACTICE

Why do ENT/Facial plastic surgery doctors use steroids?

Steroids are used in our office because they are potent anti-inflammatory agents that can help with allergy or sinus flare-ups as well as swelling after surgery. These are different than anabolic steroids that are abused to enhance strength and sports performance. We use topical nasal steroids very frequently to treat nasal allergies and sinusitis. Some commonly prescribed topical nasal steroids include Flonase (fluticasone), Nasonex (mometasone), Rhinocort, Nasacort, Veramyst, and Omnaris. We use inhaled steroids for lower airway inflammation such as asthma. Some commonly prescribed inhaled steroids are Flovent, Advair, and Symbicort. We use oral or injectable (systemic) steroids when topical steroids or inhaled steroids are not sufficient. Some commonly prescribed systemic steroids are prednisone, Kenalog (triamcinolone) and Medrol (methylprednisolone).

What are some possible side effects and complications of steroids?

Most patients tolerate the steroids that we use very well. The topical and inhaled formulations have very few systemic side effects because such a small amount is absorbed into the bloodstream. Nevertheless, nosebleeds, headaches, and (rarely) nasal septal perforation are possible complications. Also, patients with cataracts or glaucoma should not use topical nasal steroids. ***If you have cataracts or glaucoma, please be sure that we are aware of this.***

Oral steroids that we use are also generally very well-tolerated. Long-term use of systemic (oral) steroid is associated with side effects such as weight gain, immune system suppression, osteoporosis, high blood sugar, and avascular necrosis of the hip bone (damaging arthritis of the hip bone). These complications are much less common with short-term usage of the medications. However, if you have diabetes or pre-diabetes, be sure that we are aware because your blood sugar will need to be monitored closely.

Other possible side effects of systemic steroids include immune system suppression, anxiety, confusion, or psychosis. These are uncommon side effects in the general population but elderly patients have a slightly higher risk of these reactions. Prolonged use of steroids can cause suppression of adrenal gland function and if the medication is stopped abruptly then a dangerous deficiency of adrenal function is possible. Therefore the medication must be taken as directed.

Do the benefits outweigh the risks?

If we have prescribed the medication for you, then we believe that the benefits of the medication outweigh the risks. All medications carry some risk just like all medical procedures.



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It is a good idea for all patients to read the package insert that comes with your prescription. If you are concerned about a cross-reaction or side effect, please let us know.