

# Diet guidelines for children taking corticosteroids

---

## What are corticosteroids (steroids)?

Corticosteroids (steroids) are medicines sometimes used to treat:

- Asthma
- Skin disorders
- Arthritis
- Cancer
- Other medical conditions

Side effects may include:

- Increased appetite (wants to eat more than normal)
- Retaining fluids
- Weight gain
- High blood glucose (blood sugar)
- Increased loss of bone minerals

## How can I help prevent fluid retention in my child?

To help prevent your child from retaining too much fluid:

- **Avoid adding salt to their food.**
- Use herbs and spices to flavor foods rather than salt.
- **Avoid** high salt (sodium) foods, such as:
  - Fast food
  - Chips
  - Canned soups
  - Highly processed foods
- **Offer** fresh choices, such as:
  - Fresh vegetables
  - Fresh fruits
  - Fresh poultry, fish and meats
  - Homemade soups
  - Home-cooked meals

## How can I help manage my child's blood glucose and weight gain?

To help your child maintain normal blood glucose levels and limit weight gain:

- **Avoid** sweet drinks, such as:
  - Fruit juice

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

## **Diet guidelines for children taking corticosteroids, continued**

---

- Fruit drinks
- Sodas
- Punch
- Sweet tea
- Sports drinks
- Encourage your child to drink lots of plain water.
- **Limit** concentrated sweets, and only give them with a meal when served. Some sweets include:
  - Cakes
  - Pies
  - Cookies
  - Chocolate
  - Candy
- Have regular meals and planned snacks.
- Allow your child to eat to appetite at meals and planned snacks, but give only water between meals and snacks.
- Encourage them to play outside every day.
- Plan fun physical activities for the whole family.
- Make changes for the whole family, not just 1 child.
- Limit screen time to less than 2 hours each day. This includes TV, computer games, video games, and cell phone use.

### **Does my child need a vitamin or mineral supplement?**

Your child may need extra calcium or vitamin D. Talk with the doctor or nutritionist if you have questions.

### **Who should I call if I have questions?**

Call the doctor or nutritionist if you have any questions about your child's diet.

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.**

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**