

Corticosteroids

What are corticosteroids?

Corticosteroids are man-made drugs that closely resemble cortisol, a hormone secreted by the adrenal glands. Corticosteroids are often referred to by the shortened term "steroids."

How do steroids work?

Corticosteroids are powerful medications used to modify the immune response and reduce inflammation. Steroids can provide significant relief from pain, stiffness, and/or inflammation.

What are the possible side effects of steroids?

Corticosteroids have many potential side effects. The risk of adverse effects increases when steroids are given in high doses, for long periods of time, or when instructions for administration are not followed exactly. Some species, like birds and rabbits, are also considered exquisitely sensitive to steroids.

It is VITAL that your pet be monitored closely and that you know what to expect:

- Your pet can exhibit an increase in appetite, so be prepared to closely regulate or control food intake to prevent weight gain.
- Corticosteroids frequently increase thirst so it is important that water be available to your pet at all times.
- An increase in urination means that your pet should either be confined to its cage or that easy access to litter pans be provided.
- Some individuals on steroids also demonstrate a loss of energy.
- Steroids can also cause stomach irritation in some individuals so notify your veterinarian immediately if vomiting, regurgitation, or diarrhea develops.
- Finally, be sure to return your pet for reevaluation so that your veterinarian can assess your pet's response to steroids.

Please do not hesitate to contact our office with any questions or concerns.