

Methylprednisolone Pulse Therapy for Lung Diseases

Your doctor has proposed treating you with methylprednisolone (MPS) pulses. This leaflet provides more information about this treatment. What is methylprednisolone, how does the treatment proceed, and what are the possible side effects?

What is methylprednisolone?

Methylprednisolone is a medication that belongs to the group of corticosteroids, which closely resemble the adrenal hormone cortisol naturally produced by the body. Methylprednisolone is administered in high doses as a short course. By suppressing the immune system, inflammatory reactions are inhibited.

When is methylprednisolone used?

Corticosteroids are used for many conditions in which unwanted and harmful inflammatory reactions play a role. For example: asthma, COPD, sarcoidosis, and certain forms of pulmonary fibrosis.

How does the pulse therapy work?

A methylprednisolone (MPS) pulse therapy lasts three days and is given via an intravenous infusion. You may receive up to three such courses in total. For the treatment, you come to the day treatment department for three consecutive days. An IV needle is inserted. You will then receive 1.000 milligrams of methylprednisolone each day for three days. The IV is then flushed with saline, after which you can go home. The total treatment takes about 2 hours. On the third day, the IV line inserted on the first day is removed. Four and eight weeks after the first course, you will receive another course. Between the courses, you will take prednisone tablets. This is a similar medication, but in a much lower dose.

Side effects during the course

During the courses, you may experience the following side effects:

- a metallic taste in the mouth
- trouble sleeping
- a feeling of restlessness
- palpitations
- mood swings
- stomach complaints (heartburn)

- a red face
- increased blood pressure
- increased appetite.

These side effects are temporary. If you experience complaints during or after the course, it is wise to report this to the nurse or doctor. Another important and common side effect is an increased blood sugar level. This is especially important for people with diabetes. Inform the doctor or nurse if you have diabetes.

Even if you do not have diabetes, methylprednisolone can disrupt your blood sugar levels.

Therefore, during admission, your blood sugar will be checked several times a day (with a finger prick).

Long-term side effects

A side effect of long-term use of corticosteroids (such as prednisone or methylprednisolone) is an increased risk of bone loss (osteoporosis). With long-term use, it is therefore wise to use medication against this. At Amsterdam UMC, these medications are in principle prescribed to every patient. Your doctor can tell you more about this.

Interactions with other medications

It is advised to inform your doctor of all medications you are using. There are medications, for example for diabetes and certain types of diuretics, whose effects can be influenced by methylprednisolone.

Effect

The effect of the courses is assessed by means of a lung function test and possibly a chest X-ray. These examinations are usually performed a few weeks after the last course. Your pulmonologist will discuss the results of these examinations with you during an outpatient visit.

Do you have any questions?

If you have any questions or doubts, please contact the Pulmonary Diseases outpatient clinic using the contact details known to you.