

# Steroids

## Overview

Steroids are a group of medicines that help with a range of conditions in pets. They are most commonly used for reducing inflammation and managing the immune system.

Steroids are useful drugs that have many different actions on the body, they need to be used with care because they have the potential to cause side effects especially when given over a long period of time.

Steroids can be given as injections, tablets, creams or drops.

## Uses

Steroids have many actions on the body but are most commonly used for reducing inflammation and managing the immune system.

They can be used to help treat a wide range of conditions including (but not limited to):

- Skin conditions
- Immune system disorders
- Inflammation
- Some cancers
- Some eye conditions

## Side effects

Steroids are powerful drugs that have the ability to cause side effects; especially if they're used over a long period of time or at

the same time as other drugs. Side effects to keep an eye out for include:

- Increased thirst
- Increased hunger
- Weight gain
- Muscle weakness
- High blood sugar
- Fat redistribution (pot belly)
- Skin changes
- Behaviour changes
- Disrupted hormone levels
- Infections

Side effects can be worrying but they are often better than putting up with the alternative (not taking the medication). Your vet will try to minimise side effects by prescribing the most suitable steroid at an appropriate dose for your pet.

Your vet will also tell you which medicines to avoid when giving steroids (such as NSAIDs). If you're worried it's best to speak to your vet.

## When to contact your vet

Speak to your vet for advice if you're worried about your pet. Never give steroids without prescription – they can be dangerous if used at the wrong time, in the wrong pet or for the wrong condition. Contact your vet if your pet has been prescribed steroids and is showing any of the side effects listed above.

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