

Corticosteroids and nutrition

Corticosteroids are medicines that control redness or swelling. These medicines can effect your child and it is helpful to understand how to help them manage their side effects.

How do corticosteroids affect my child's nutrition?

If your child takes a corticosteroid medicine longer than 1–2 weeks, the medicine can change your child's appetite and nutritional needs. Children who take corticosteroids often have more of an appetite. This can lead to weight gain, higher blood pressure, high blood sugar levels, and weaker bones.

How can I help when my child is taking corticosteroids?

Weight gain

Increased appetite is a common side effect of corticosteroids. If weight gain is a problem, offer your child lower-calorie foods and drinks. Have them avoid high-fat foods and snacks, and encourage regular exercise.

Higher blood pressure

Corticosteroids may cause higher blood pressure levels. Your child's healthcare provider should routinely check your child's blood pressure. If your child has high blood pressure, talk to their healthcare provider to see if avoiding high-salt foods could help.

Higher blood sugar levels

Corticosteroids may increase your child's blood sugar levels. If this becomes a problem, you may need to talk to your child's healthcare provider or a dietitian about changing your child's diet.



Calcium and Vitamin D

If your child takes corticosteroids for a long time, it may affect their bone development. The right amount of calcium and Vitamin D will help keep your child's bones growing properly. Dairy foods and fortified soymilks are the most common source of calcium.

Your child should have 2–3 servings of dairy foods daily. One cup of milk or yogurt is one serving. One to 1.5 ounces of cheese is one serving. If you are still concerned that your child is not getting enough calcium, they should take a supplement. Your child may need to take a calcium supplement 2–3 times a day. However, do not give your child more than 500 mg of calcium at a time.

Your child generally gets enough Vitamin D if they take a daily multivitamin.

If you have further questions about how corticosteroids affect your child's nutrition, contact your child's healthcare provider or a dietitian.

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