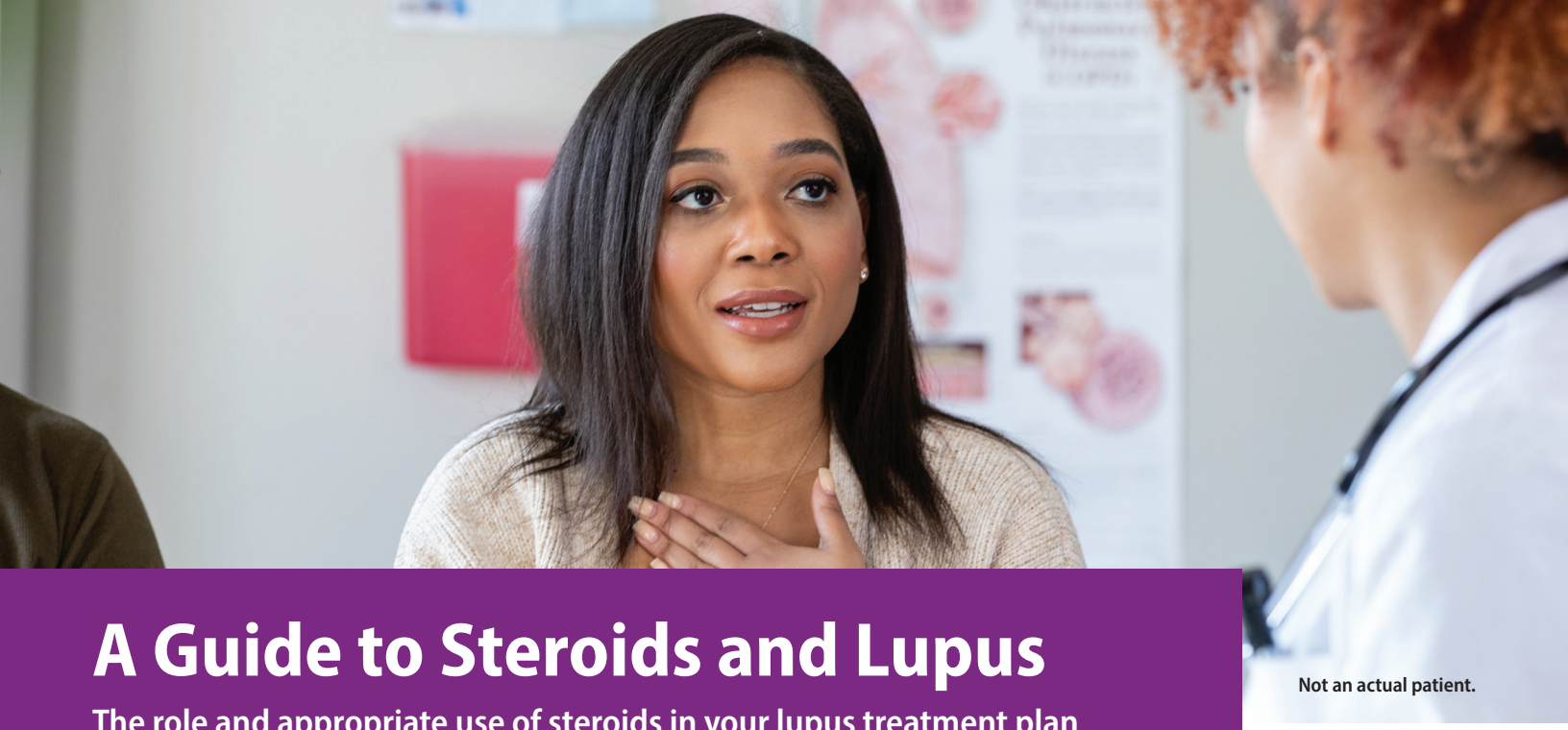


Not an actual patient.

A Guide to Steroids and Lupus

The role and appropriate use of steroids in your lupus treatment plan

What are steroids?

Steroids lower immune system activity to reduce pain and inflammation. They are commonly used in lupus treatment and may help reduce inflammation during disease flares.

They can offer short-term symptom relief, but they also have potential side effects and significant health risks.

These risks can occur even at lower doses and may increase with higher doses.

It's important that you understand the role of steroids in your treatment and feel comfortable discussing them with your doctor.

Understanding the benefits and risks of steroids

Steroids can be an important tool in relieving symptoms during a flare. However, they are generally used at the lowest effective dose for the shortest possible time.

The risk of steroid-related side effects generally increases with higher doses and longer use. Some effects can occur soon after treatment begins, while others develop over time.

In the short term, steroids can cause*:

- Weight gain and metabolic changes
- Acne
- Thinning hair
- Mood changes
- Problems sleeping
- Risk of infection

In the long term, steroids can cause*:

- Bone loss
- Eye problems, such as cataracts and glaucoma
- High blood pressure and cholesterol, which may increase the risk of heart disease
- Increased risk of fracture

*This is not a complete list of potential side effects associated with steroid use.

Ask your doctor about whether reducing steroids should be a part of your treatment plan.



Reducing steroids safely

Steroids can help get lupus inflammation under control quickly during a flare, but they are generally recommended for short-term control rather than as the long-term treatment plan.

The good news is that in recent years, treatment options, such as biologics, have become available for lupus that may help control the disease long term and reduce the need for steroids.

Steroids may be used initially to rapidly control inflammation while other treatments are introduced to help achieve and maintain disease control.

As other medications begin to work, your care team may gradually lower your steroid dose through a process called tapering.

Tapering is necessary because your body has adapted to steroids over time. It will need time to adjust as you reduce your dose.

Do not reduce or stop taking your medicine without talking to your care team first.

The American College of Rheumatology has recommended that people with well-controlled lupus should take the lowest dose of steroids for the shortest amount of time.

You and your doctor can work together to make a treatment plan that answers the following questions:

Why am I on steroids, and can we work toward reducing them?

What medicines will help control my lupus long term so we can consider reducing oral steroid use?

What should I do if I notice new symptoms or if my lupus symptoms get worse?

Aim for

5 mg

or less daily of oral steroid usage (like prednisone)

within 6 months if your lupus is under control.

You and your doctor will work together to find the right lupus treatment plan.

You are a partner in your care. Ask your doctor about the use of steroids in your current treatment plan. Good lupus care is a conversation where your voice matters!

SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE

or visit lupus.org/medications for more information

Help Us Solve The Cruel Mystery

LUPUS FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

Support for this educational resource was provided by AstraZeneca

©2026 Lupus Foundation of America, Inc. All rights reserved. US-118038 10/26