

one: Friend and Fiend

Most people are familiar with the term cortisone, which is really another word for cortisol, a hormone produced by the body in times of stress. In higher doses, cortisol has potent anti-inflammatory properties, making it a very useful medication. Because of this property, cortisol has been synthetically improved so as to provide an entire family of drugs.

These medications last longer than natural cortisol and are stronger. There has never been a drug with more applications in disease treatment. Indeed, this group is rivaled only by antibiotics in lives saved. Side effects from cortisone are numerous and can be short-term or long-term. The pet on cortisone is likely to experience the following-increased hunger, increased thirst, panting (dogs), general loss of energy. Further, pre-diabetic animals may be "tipped over" into a diabetic state with steroid use.

Often in these cases, the diabetes resolves once the steroid wears off. Sensitive individuals may experience upset stomach that can be serious. Should the above issues become problematic, generally adjusting to a lower dose of medication will solve the problem. The goal with cortisone is always to find the lowest dose of medication that is still effective. Sometimes changing to another steroid solves the problem.

There are many conditions that require long-term suppression of the immune system. Cortisone doses generally include an anti-inflammatory dose that is lower and an immune suppressive dose that is higher, although with enough long term use, lower doses will become immune suppressive.

Glucocorticoid hormones are not bad and it is not inherently bad to use them. They should be respected and not over-used. Pet owners should be aware of steroid side effects and that it is usually possible to alter the regimen to minimize side effects. Do not use cortisone on a daily basis except when your veterinarian specifically tells you to. Life-threatening immune-mediated diseases often require daily steroid use. Most steroid protocols require daily use at first only.

If using steroids to control itchy skin or for musculoskeletal pain, it is important at least to use an every other day schedule. If you feel your pet is not comfortable except with daily steroid use, the regimen will need to be altered so inform your veterinarian. Do not stock large quantities of cortisone at home.

It may seem frustrating to have to get multiple refills and it may be less expensive to buy in bulk, but your veterinarian will need to periodically check in with you about how you are using your medication and will likely not allow for large quantities to go so as to be sure to keep in contact with you and to prevent over-use.

Kind Regards,

Scott & Chris



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