

Steroids are a type of medication that are used in the treatment of many chronic neurological conditions. They work by reducing inflammation in the body, which can help to alleviate symptoms. However, the long-term use of steroids can carry some risks and it is important for patients to be aware of these.

One risk of long-term steroid use is the development of osteoporosis or thinning of the bones. This can increase the risk of fractures and may require additional treatment to prevent further bone loss. Patients may be advised to take calcium and vitamin D supplements or other medications to help prevent this.

Another risk of long-term steroid use is the potential for high blood pressure, weight gain, and diabetes. Patients may be advised to monitor their blood sugar levels and to follow a healthy diet and exercise regimen to help reduce these risks.

There are also risks from high-dose short-term, pulsed steroids, which are given over a short period of time, for example to treat an MS relapse. They can increase the risk of avascular necrosis of the hip. This is a condition in which the bone tissue in the hip joint dies due to lack of blood supply. Patients receiving high-dose pulse steroids should be advised to report any hip pain or discomfort immediately.

Patients receiving long-term, steroids should also be aware of the risks associated with sudden withdrawal or discontinuation of the medication. This can result in a condition called adrenal insufficiency, which can cause symptoms such as fatigue, weakness, and low blood pressure.

Patients may be advised to carry a steroid alert card or Medialert bracelet and to follow sick day rules, which include increasing the dose of steroids during times of illness or stress.

It is important for patients to discuss the risks and benefits of steroid treatment with their healthcare provider and to follow their prescribed treatment regimen closely.

Patients who are concerned about the potential risks of long-term steroid use may wish to discuss alternative treatment options with their doctor.