

## **Nutrition for the Child on Steroids** (Prednisone, ACTH and other steroid medicines)

### **What nutrition related concerns might occur with use of steroid medicines?**

- **Fluid retention.** This can cause swelling of the hands, feet and face. It can also cause high blood pressure and extra weight gain.
- **Increased appetite.** Eating more can cause rapid weight gain.
- **Increased calcium needs:** calcium losses from bones are increased with steroids. Good calcium and vitamin D intake is needed to prevent weakening of bones.
- **Increased blood sugar levels.** Simple sugars in the diet may need to be reduced.

### **What can I do to prevent or treat these problems in my child?**

Look for and give your child foods that are:

- **Low in sodium (salt).** This will help limit fluid retention and high blood pressure.
- **High in calcium and vitamin D.** These help replace calcium losses from bones.
- **Have no concentrated sweets.** This is helpful if high blood sugars develop.

**\*\*For babies:** Breast-feed or give formula as usual. Offer age-appropriate foods that have calcium. Most baby foods meet the guidelines listed above. If your child is eating table food, follow the guidelines above. If your child is breastfed, talk to your doctor or dietitian about vitamin D supplements.

### **How can I keep my child's diet low in salt?**

- **Do not put the salt shaker on the table.**
- **Limit condiments. Use fresh herbs and spices or salt free seasonings.**
- **Do not use foods if you can see salt on them.**
- **Do not use salt in cooking or baking.**
- **Limit use of processed foods. Use fresh foods whenever possible.**
- **Make better choices at restaurants.** Order sandwiches without sauce, catsup, mustard, cheese or pickles. Ask for french fries to be unsalted. Do not choose soup. Choose small or regular size items instead of super or giant size. Add a side item of fruit or a vegetable.

### **High salt foods to limit**

- **Processed meat.** Ham, bacon, hot dogs, sausage, deli meat.
- **Boxed mixes.** Macaroni and cheese, Ramen Noodles, hamburger skillet meals, flavored rice or pasta pouches.
- **Seasonings and sauces.** Soy sauce, BBQ sauce, ketchup, mustard, salad dressings, marinades, spices containing salt such as garlic salt and seasoning salt.
- **Canned foods.** Vegetables, tomatoes and tomato sauce, canned meats, ravioli, soups
- **Frozen foods.** Pizza, frozen dinners, chicken nuggets and fish sticks, frozen vegetables with sauce, pocket sandwiches, pizza rolls.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size	½ cup (114 g)
Servings Per Container	4
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	Calories From Fat
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat	
Saturated Fat	
Cholesterol	0 mg 0%
Sodium	300 mg 13%
Total Carbohydrate	
Dietary Fiber	
Sugars	
Protein	

**Read food labels.**

The Nutrition Facts label can help you figure out how much sodium is in each serving of a food.

The nutrition information is not always for the whole container of food. You must **look at the serving size** on the first line of the food label. You will need to figure out the amount of sodium your child eats based on how much of

For the label on the left, if your child eats:

½ cup of the food = 300 mg sodium.

¼ cup of the food = 150 mg sodium.

2 cups of the food= 1200 mg sodium

Limiting sodium intake to less than 2500 mg is a good first step. Your doctor or dietitian will tell you if you need to limit sodium to a different amount.

**How can I get enough calcium and vitamin D in my child’s diet?**

This chart shows how much calcium and vitamin D is needed daily, based on age, while on steroids. You should consider these as minimum intake goals. If you do not think you can meet your calcium and/or vitamin D needs with food, ask your dietitian or doctor for recommendations of appropriate vitamin and mineral supplements.

Age	Calcium	Vitamin D
7-12 months	600mg	600 IU
1 to 3 years	1000mg	600 IU
4 to 8 years	1200mg	600 IU
Over 9 years	1500mg	600 IU

\*Oncology Nutrition for Clinical Practice-Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, 2013

**Mealtime tips**

- Eat three to four servings of dairy each day.
- Add extra milk or cheese to pizza, soups, macaroni and cheese, and baked goods.
- Use calcium fortified foods like orange juice with added calcium and vitamin D.
- Good calcium food sources include:

Source	Amount of calcium
Milk, 8 oz. (all types)	280-300 mg
Yogurt, 8 oz.	350-400 mg
Cheese, 1 oz.	175-275 mg
Ice cream, ½ cup	88 mg
Fortified soy milk, 8 oz.	200-300 mg
Greens (collard, mustard, spinach), ½ cup	100-180

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 1 cup (236ml)		
Servings Per Container 1		
Amount Per Serving		
<b>Calories</b>	80	Calories from Fat 0
		% Daily Value*
<b>Total Fat</b>	0g	<b>0%</b>
Saturated Fat	0g	<b>0%</b>
Trans Fat	0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b>	Less than 5mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b>	120mg	<b>5%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	11g	<b>4%</b>
Dietary Fiber	0g	<b>0%</b>
Sugars	11g	
<b>Protein</b>	9g	<b>17%</b>
Vitamin A	10%	Vitamin C 4%
Calcium	30%	Iron 0% • Vitamin D 25%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.		

Food labels list calcium as a percent daily value. You should add a zero to this number to determine the calcium content per serving of the food.

In the example to the left, this food has 300 mg calcium per serving.

**Note:** This rule does not apply to all nutrients on a food label.

## How to manage blood sugars

If your child's blood sugars are too high, follow these recommendations.

- Avoid sugar containing beverages, sweet desserts and candy. Look for drinks with less than 3 grams of sugar per serving (exception is white milk).
- Eat whole grain and high fiber foods. Look for more than 3 grams of fiber in grains. Limit refined grains.
- Eat three regular meals which are spaced throughout the day.
- Include protein at each meal.
- Participate in regular physical activity each day.

**ALERT:** Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**