

Navigating PMR:

Treatment

Understand your treatment options, including medications, tapering strategies, and how to work with your doctor to manage PMR effectively.

This guide is for general information only and does not replace advice from your doctor or care team. Always talk with your healthcare provider before making changes to your exercise, diet, or treatment plan.



NAVIGATING PMR: TREATMENT

Essential Guide for Everyday Management

What You Need to Know About Managing Your Condition

Getting the right treatment for PMR can make a significant difference in how you feel. This guide explains the main treatment options, what to expect, and how to work with your healthcare team to find what works best for you.

Treatment Overview

The goal of PMR treatment: The main goal is to reduce inflammation, relieve your symptoms (pain and stiffness), and help you return to your normal activities while minimizing medication side effects.

What to Expect



Most people respond well to treatment and see improvement within days to weeks.



Treatment typically lasts 1–3 years, though some people need it longer.



Your doctor will work with you to find the lowest dose of medication that controls your symptoms.



Regular follow-up appointments and blood tests help monitor how the treatment is working.

Corticoid (Steroid) Use

What are steroids? Corticosteroids, such as prednisone or prednisolone, are anti-inflammatory medications. They work by reducing the inflammation in your muscles and joints that cause PMR symptoms.

How quickly do they work? Many people notice significant improvement within 1–3 days of starting steroids.¹ If you don't feel better after a week, let your doctor know—this might mean the diagnosis of PMR needs to be reconsidered or the dose needs adjusting.

Starting dose: Most people begin with 12.5–25 mg of prednisone per day, depending on symptom severity and other health factors.

How long will I take steroids? Treatment typically lasts 1–3 years followed by temporary steroid use for disease flares. Some people need treatment for a shorter time, while others require longer courses. The key is to reduce the dose gradually while keeping symptoms controlled.



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Possible Side Effects of Steroids:

- Increased appetite and weight gain
- Trouble sleeping
- Mood changes (feeling more emotional, anxious, or irritable)
- Increased blood sugar levels
- Increased risk of infections
- Fluid retention and swelling
- Upset stomach

Long-term Steroid Use May Cause:

- Bone loss (osteoporosis) and increased fracture risk
- Cataracts or glaucoma
- High blood pressure
- Thinning skin and easy bruising
- Muscle weakness

How to Reduce Your Risk for Side Effects



- Take steroids with food to protect your stomach.
- Consult your doctor on vitamins and doses.
- Get regular bone density scans if using steroids long-term.
- Check blood sugar and pressure regularly.
- Stay active to maintain muscle and bone health.

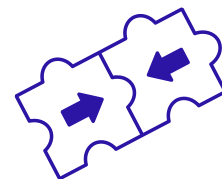
What is Combination Therapy?

This means using steroids along with another medication to help control PMR.

The goal is often to reduce the amount of steroids you need or help you taper off of them more successfully.

Why Consider Combination Therapy?

- You're having significant side effects from steroids.
- You need high doses of steroids to control symptoms.
- Your symptoms flare when trying to reduce steroids.
- You have other health conditions that make long-term steroid use risky.





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Medications That May Be Used with Steroids

Some people need more than steroids alone to manage PMR. Your doctor may suggest one of these options:

- Methotrexate – A weekly pill or injection that may help you reduce your steroid dose over time. It takes a few weeks to kick in and requires regular blood tests.
- Sarilumab – An FDA-approved injection given every two weeks. It works by blocking a protein called IL-6 that drives inflammation. Your doctor may recommend it if steroids aren't controlling your symptoms well enough or are causing side effects.
- Tocilizumab – A similar injection-based option that targets inflammation in a different way. It may be considered if steroids aren't working well for you.

Your doctor may also prescribe medications [to protect your stomach](#), [strengthen your bones](#), or [manage blood sugar or blood pressure changes](#) that steroids can sometimes cause.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor



- ❓ Is combination therapy right for me?
- ❓ What are the benefits and side effects of any new medication?
- ❓ How long will I need to take it, and what monitoring will I need?
- ❓ What can I do to minimize side effects from medication?



Not everyone with PMR needs combination therapy — but for some people, it makes a real difference. Your doctor can help find the right approach for you.



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Tapering Steroids

What is tapering? Tapering means slowly reducing your steroid dose over time. This allows your body to adjust and helps prevent PMR symptoms from returning. Tapering steroids requires precision. Taking the wrong dose or reducing the dose too quickly or too slowly can affect how you feel.

IMPORTANT SAFETY NOTE!



Always talk with your doctor before stopping steroids. Your body needs time to adjust as the dose decreases. Stopping suddenly can cause serious problems.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor About Tapering



- ? What is my new dose? (For example: "reduce from 15 mg to 12.5 mg")
- ? Can you write down the exact dose I should take and when I should start?
- ? How do I take this new dose? (Do I need a different pill strength? Should I split tablets?)
- ? When do I start the new dose? (Right away? After finishing my current prescription?)
- ? How many weeks or days do I stay at this dose before reducing again?
- ? What symptoms mean I should call you before the next reduction?

When to Call the Doctor

- ☎ **Pain and stiffness** not improving after a week or more on steroids
- ☎ **Symptoms are getting worse** or a flare has returned
- ☎ **Side effects** that concern you such as blood sugar problems, vision changes, swelling, unusual bruising, signs of infection, or stomach pain
- ☎ **Trouble tapering** medication
- ☎ **New headaches, jaw pain, or vision problems**
- ☎ **A new health condition, new medications, or upcoming surgery**
- ☎ **Questions about other treatment options or concerns**

YOUR RESOURCE FOR PMR INFORMATION AND UPDATES

Learn more at **GHLF.org/LivePMR**
or scan the QR code!



You can use your phone's
camera to scan the code!

