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STEROIDS

General Information

Steroids are the most potent agents available to combat non-infectious inflammatory processes. These drugs are potent and remarkably safe. They reduce inflammatory edema of the mucous membrane and allow the blocked sinuses to drain. The steroids often shrink nasal polyps and also may restore the patient's sense of smell. The use of oral steroids is a rational non-surgical choice to restore normal membrane physiology.

In my experience, it is safer, more effective, and less expensive in overall costs to establish drainage in patients with chronic sinusitis by using oral steroids, such as prednisone, to reduce the mucosal inflammation and thus reduce the mucosal edema and induration. Surgery is reserved as a last resort if medications fail. Prednisone has proved to be extremely effective when given in adequate dosages. Side effects may be minimized by limiting the course to 14 days maximum and by administering the drug in a single morning dose. Steroids can be used equally well in children at a lower dose, and if at all possible, a shorter duration of treatment.

Side effects with this program are minor and rare. They usually include an increase in appetite after a few days of drug use, transient salt and water retention, occasional mild mood changes, and somewhat altered sleep patterns. There is rarely any significant weight gain. Patients occasionally develop leg muscle cramps at night. But, for the most part, none of these are experienced, and if so, they are so slight as not to be noticed by the patient. In such cases, patients are grateful that surgery has been avoided and they are able to breathe more freely. Improvement may be maintained by the long-term daily use of topical steroids, which once again exert local anti-inflammatory action without systemic side effects. Relapses may occur, particularly after upper respiratory infections, allergy flare-ups, etc.

Medical studies have revealed patient uneasiness and confusion surrounding use of steroids for sinus treatment; however, these steroids should not be confused with anabolic steroids used for muscle building. The steroids prescribed for you are safe and effective for treatment of your sinus condition.