

A Look in the Mirror



Puberty and the years that follow can be a difficult time for everyone, and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) can definitely complicate things. What your doctor may not tell you (and what your parents may not understand) is that having IBD affects the body **and** spirit, and medications can often cause unexpected physical, emotional, and hormonal changes. These changes can be tough to deal with, especially during a time when our bodies are growing, and images and style are important.

Here are a couple of strategies to help you keep a positive body image despite the changes:

- **Exercise**—no matter what medications you are on or how active your disease is, include some exercise in your daily routine (anything from yoga to team sports). Exercise will keep you fit and can improve your mood.
- **Use humour** to make light of negative body changes. Others' perceptions will reflect your attitude. *For example, if you have a "moon face" joke that you are a squirrel storing nuts for the winter!*
- This can be a hard one to remember along the way, but remember the **benefits of the medications/treatment outweigh the negatives** of the temporary body changes.

Some IBD Truths:

Your weight will go up and down like a roller coaster.

-Don't stress yourself over these normal fluctuations.

-Hold on to clothes of different sizes so you are prepared for different body sizes.

-Keep photos from different weight zones handy to remind yourself that you are the same person.

-DON'T diet.

There may be side effects.

-Some of the medications used to treat IBD have undesirable side effects.

-They may include mood swings, moon face, increased appetite, weight gain, water retention (bloating), hair thinning, peach fuzz on your face and stomach and acne.

-You may experience all, none or some of these side effects.

-Remember that these side effects are normal, are not your fault and will disappear when you are off the drug.

If you happen to go on **Prednisone** (a very common drug used to treat IBD) you might get affected by "Moon face". Just remember that it is water retention and not fat! Drinking lots of water and decreased salt intake can help reduce this.

- Remember that **you are more than your “moon face,”** acne, etc. You are a beautiful person who just happens to be going through some changes.



Prednisone Love: Over the Moon for You

- Remember that the majority of body changes caused by meds are **temporary!**
- If you are feeling badly about how you look, try making a list of things you like about yourself. E.g., My blue eyes, My smile, My sense of humour. Keep this list as a reminder of your great characteristics.
- Don't stress about others' perceptions. Your side effects are more noticeable to you than they are to others.
- **Talk to others** about how you are feeling. You will find that all people struggle with their body image at some point in time.

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