

Long-term Corticosteroid Hormone Replacement Therapy – Department of Endocrinology

An information guide



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Introduction

Your endocrinologist has started you on corticosteroid replacement because your body is currently unable to make enough of the hormone by itself. This may be due to either adrenal or pituitary disease. This booklet explains when and how to take your medication and what to do if you are unwell.

Corticosteroids will be referred to as steroids throughout this booklet.

When to take your tablets

You should take your first tablet(s) of the day immediately on waking and before getting out of bed in the morning. You may find it helpful to leave your tablets at the bedside the night before, along with a glass of water.

It is best not to take your last dose of medication later than 6pm as it may keep you awake at night or they may give you very vivid dreams/nightmares.

Timing of steroid medication

Hydrocortisone 10mg tablets or prednisolone 5mg tablets

On waking () mg = () tablets

At lunch () mg = () tablets

At tea () mg = () tablets

When you are unwell, or under physical or mental stress.

In healthy people the body would naturally increase the amount of steroids to cope with times of illness. Therefore, in patients who cannot make enough steroids and are having to take them as tablets, it is essential to increase steroid tablets to help your body cope.

- Having simple coughs and colds or another mild illness does not require any change to the tablet regime
- If you are unwell and have a temperature >37.5 then you should double the dose of steroid tablets. As an example, 10mg /5mg per day would increase to 20mg/10mg per day. Once you are well again, (say in 2-3 days) go back to your usual dose. It is important that you see your GP during this time
- If you are travelling across time zones, a small extra dose may be taken to cope with the extra stress
- If you have vomiting and/or diarrhoea or other serious illness, the tablets may not be absorbed. If you have an emergency injection, and are confident to inject, then it should be given at this time before immediately seeking medical advice. (The injection kit is intended to stabilise your condition while you wait for medical help, not as a replacement for medical care)
- If you have continued vomiting, diarrhoea or other serious illness, it is essential to get medical advice, which may include attending your local accident and emergency department for a hydrocortisone injection and ongoing care.

Important points to remember

- You MUST NEVER miss taking your steroid tablets
- You should ALWAYS CARRY YOUR STEROID CARD with you and ideally WEAR A 'MedicAlert' BRACELET OR NECKLACE to alert health professionals that you are steroid dependent.
- Repeat prescriptions should be ordered from your local GP surgery
- Always carry spare tablets with you and NEVER RUN OUT of tablets
- Medication should be stored out of the reach of children
- Regularly check the expiry date of your emergency injection
- If you are having surgery including dental/invasive procedures such as endoscopy, you must tell your surgeon, anaesthetist or doctor that you are taking steroid tablets
- Signs of an adrenal crisis may include; severe nausea, headache, dizziness, extreme weakness, chills or fever, confusion.

We advise wearing Medic Alert jewellery with the medical symbol of a serpent and staff on it (widely available from both jewellers and internet websites).

Benefits of taking your steroids

Corticosteroids are important to maintain a normal quality of life, to regulate blood pressure and for the feelings of having energy and alertness.

Risks of not taking your steroids

Tiredness, dizziness, collapse, Addisonian crisis or in extreme cases, coma and life-threatening illness.

Possible side-effects

They may include gastrointestinal discomfort with associated nausea, weight gain and increased susceptibility to infection (For full list, please see the patient information leaflet enclosed with your medication).

Never attempt to stop this medication without first talking to your endocrinologist

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact your endocrinology doctor or nurse.

Contact Information

Normal working hours (Monday to Friday): the endocrine team (all telephone numbers are direct to consultant's secretaries). At other times (5pm to 9pm) or in case of emergency or urgent advice being required, you should contact your own GP or go to your local Accident and Emergency department.

Fairfield General Hospital

Dr S Rowles, Dr H Smithhurst, Dr L Pichaipillai and Dr S Kouta

Telephone: 0161 778 2676

Department Fax Number: 0161 778 3917

The Royal Oldham Hospital

Dr TK Jagadhish

Telephone: 0161 627 8778

Dr BM Mishra and Dr A Shiraz

Telephone: 0161 778 5431

Department Fax Number: 0161 627 8175

Rochdale Infirmary

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Telephone: 01706 517 032

Department Fax Number: 01706 517 869

North Manchester General Hospital

Professor C Dang, Dr I Malik and Dr S Farook

Telephone: 0161 720 2086

Dr R Khurana, Dr H Chandrasekara and Dr V Arul Devah

Telephone: 0161 604 5349

Department Fax Number: 0161 720 2029

Endocrine Specialist Nurse:

Cristina Edward – 0161 918 4069

Karen Hallett - 0161 627 8388

Patient Self Help Groups and Further Information

The Pituitary Foundation, 86, Colston Street, Bristol, BS1 5BB

Information and Support Helpline - 0117 370 1320

(Mon-Fri 08.00-16.00)

www.pituitary.org.uk

The UK Addison's Disease Self Help Group (ADSHG)

www.addisons.org.uk

If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service

Jeśli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy, skontaktuj się z działem tłumaczeń ustnych i pisemnych

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Dacă engleza nu este prima ta limbă și ai nevoie de ajutor, te rugăm să contactezi Serviciul de interpretare și traducere

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For advice on stopping smoking contact the Specialist Stop Smoking Service on 01706 517 522

For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897

For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 624 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service

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