

Information about

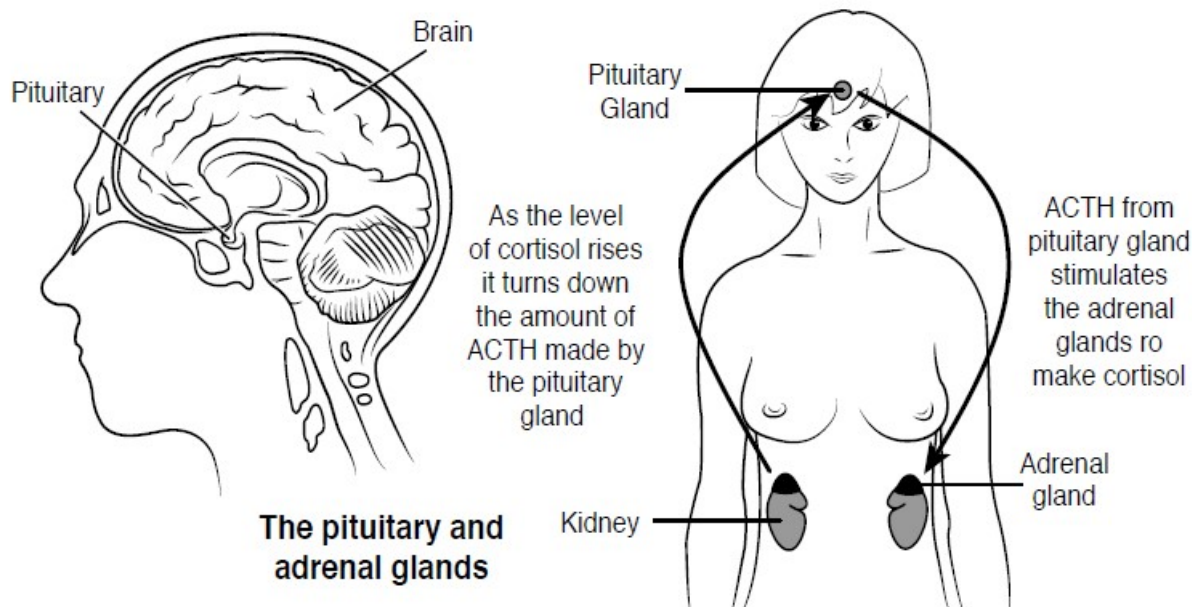
Steroid treatment advice for adults during intercurrent illness (when you are unwell)

This leaflet will give you advice about steroid treatment including:

- What is cortisol?
- What is steroid treatment?
- How do you manage steroid treatment in intercurrent illness (episodes of being unwell)?
- When should I adjust my steroid medication? Special precautions
- Side effects
- Is there anything else I should know?
- Contact Details
- Further Information

What is cortisol?

Cortisol is the most important natural steroid and is produced from the adrenal glands under the control of the pituitary gland.



Cortisol has several roles but importantly it helps the body deal with the stress of illness and injury

What is steroid treatment?

As well as being used for hormone replacement in individuals with adrenal or pituitary disease steroids are used in several inflammatory conditions. Common types of steroid tablets are prednisolone, dexamethasone and hydrocortisone.

The following advice is for those on:

- 10mg or less of Prednisolone,
- 1.5mg or less of Dexamethasone
- 40mg or less of Hydrocortisone

Those on higher doses of these medications do **NOT** need to alter treatment when unwell.

How do you manage steroid treatment in intercurrent illness (episodes of being unwell)?

If you are on steroid treatment this may reduce your body's own ability to increase cortisol when you are unwell. In such situations it might be necessary to increase the steroid treatment dose to help fight intercurrent illness or injury. These are often called sick day rules.

When should I adjust my steroid medication?

Normally the adjustment of steroid dosing is done in conjunction with your doctor (Hospital doctor or GP). However, when unwell (any illness, injury such as broken bones, or any operation) it may help your body deal with this by increasing your steroids for a few days.

In these circumstances it is important to double your dose quickly.

You can do this by increasing your recommended steroid dose in the following circumstances noting the advice below:

Coughs and colds	A simple cold with a cough and “runny nose”. No need to take additional steroids. However, if you have a “flu” or feel weak and require bed rest then double your prescribed steroid dose for 2 to 3 days.
Temperature	If you have a temperature above 37.5°C. This would indicate that you have some sort of infection. Double your prescribed steroid dose for 2 to 3 days. If you have a temperature above 40°C. Triple your normal prescribed steroid dose and seek medical attention as you may be developing an adrenal crisis.
COVID-19	Take 20mg of hydrocortisone roughly every 6 hours eg 06:00, 12:00, 18:00 and 24:00 hours. If on prednisolone take 10mg twice daily eg 06:00 and 18:00 hours.
Antibiotics	If you are prescribed antibiotics. Double your prescribed steroid dose whilst taking your antibiotics.
Injury	If you break a bone or suffer a similar injury. Immediately take a double dose of your prescribed steroid for 2 to 3 days.
Diarrhoea	Double your prescribed steroid dose until the diarrhoea stops. If you have severe diarrhoea and vomiting you may need additional medical input and you should get immediate medical advice. (From your GP, Accident and Emergency Department, NHS 24 or 999).
Vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It takes about one hour for the body to absorb steroids.• If you vomit within one hour of taking your medication – take a double dose of your prescribed steroid immediately.• If you vomit again take double the dose again and get urgent medical advice• If you are continually sick and unable to “keep anything down” get medical advice immediately and administer your emergency hydrocortisone injection if you have this available and are trained to do so.
The steroid dose should be directly reduced back to the normal pre-illness dose after 2 or 3 days. If there’s an ongoing illness then seek medical advice.	
Individuals on hydrocortisone	Ideally your dose should be increased to a total of least 40mg, eg, 20mg on waking, 10mg at lunch and 10mg at tea.
Individuals on Plenadren	Revert back to immediate release hydrocortisone as above.

Special Precautions

Dental Appointments

Check Up No requirement to adjust dosing of steroids

Tooth extraction or root canal work

Take double your usual steroid dose 1 hour prior to the procedure and continue double dose for 24 hours. If well, return to your usual dose.

Fillings, scale and polish

Take an extra steroid dose, eg, 5 to 10mg hydrocortisone or 5mg prednisolone if you are likely to find this “stressful”. If you develop any new symptoms of lethargy, headache, nausea or vomiting afterwards take an extra dose of steroid.

General anaesthetic

If you need surgery, either routine or emergency, it is vital that you tell the surgeons that you take steroid therapy.

Emotional stress

Current recommendations are that there is no requirement for increased steroids during periods of psychological or emotional stress.

Travel

When travelling abroad it is advised that you take twice the amount of steroid medication with you that you would normally use in case you need to double your dose.

Side effects

Steroids can be associated with a number of side effects such as: high blood pressure, diabetes, weight gain and osteoporosis. It is very unlikely that you would be at excess risk of these by increasing your dose for a few days.

Is there anything else I should know?

It is very important that you carry a “steroid card” with you at all times.

If you require urgent medical attention you should advise the ambulance service or emergency department you are at risk of an **Addisonian or adrenal crisis**

You should let anyone looking after you, for example a doctor or dentist, know that you are taking steroid treatment. A KIS (Key Information Summary) alert should be added to your medical file at your GP surgery.

We recommend that you put an alert on your mobile phone home screen. Paramedics and healthcare professional will often look for this on your phone if you are unable to communicate with them.

We recommend that you purchase a **Medic-alert** or **Talisman bracelet or necklace**. This is not compulsory but it is an easy way for anyone to see at a glance that you may require steroids.

Medic Alert Foundation
1 Bridge Wharf,
156 Caledonian Road
London N1 9UU
0800 581 420 (Freephone)
www.medicalert.org.uk

Talisman Jewellery Ltd.
21 Grays corner,
Ley Street
Ilford
Essex IG2 7RQ
020 8554 5579
www.sotalisman.org

Contact Details

GP Practice: _____

Consultant: _____

Secretary: _____

Further Information

This booklet is for general information only.

While we have taken every care to compile accurate information and to keep it up-to-date, we cannot guarantee its correctness and completeness.

Useful Websites

www.pituitary.org

www.adshq.org.uk

Review Date: January 2024