

# Steroid

## Information Pack



**Thomas Addison Unit  
Lanesborough Wing**

## Introduction

- You have been asked by the Doctor or Nurse to take 'Steroid' tablets as your body is unable to make enough of its own steroid.
- It is very important that you take these tablets exactly as they are prescribed.
- These tablets should **never** be stopped abruptly as this may make you feel very unwell and it can be very dangerous.
- When you are unwell, it is important to increase your tablets to help your body cope with your illness. Please refer to 'Recommendations for change in dose'
- It is advisable for a close relative or friend to also be aware of what to do if you are unwell.
- Please take time to read the enclosed information.
- Any Questions, please call:

**The Endocrine Investigation Unit on 020 8725 0923 / 0929.**

## Hydrocortisone

### Why do I need to take Hydrocortisone?

Your body needs a steroid called cortisol to survive. It helps you cope with physical and emotional stress. It helps release glucose from your body cells for energy and it also helps to keep your blood pressure normal. Hydrocortisone tablets replaces the body's cortisol, which is not being produced by your body.

### What side effects are there?

As with other medicines it has some side effects. The main side effects are, thinning of your bones and weight gain. However, you will be carefully monitored so that you have the least amount needed by your body.

### How often do I need to take it?

It is taken as a tablet, usually two to three times a day.

### What happens if I do not take it?

It is very important to take your tablets exactly as the doctor or nurse has advised. If you do not take your tablets after several hours you may feel very poorly and will need to go straight to casualty.

### What happens if I am unable to take the tablets when I am ill?

You will need to either give yourself an emergency injection or go straight to the casualty department. Please tell them you are dependent on steroids. Always carry your blue steroid card with you.

## Addisonion crisis

When you are ill, have an accident or a physical/emotional stress, the body requires more cortisol to cope. An Addisonion crisis occurs when your body does not have enough cortisol and cannot cope. See below:

### Causes of an Adrenal crisis

- Severe physical / emotional shock
- Severe infection
- Severe dehydration

### Signs and symptoms

- Extreme weakness
- Confusion
- Dizziness
- Nausea/Vomiting
- Low blood pressure
- Abdominal tenderness
- Drowsiness
- Feeling very cold
- Severe headache

**If you get any of these symptoms, please take extra hydrocortisone. See 'Recommendations for change in dose'**

## Recommendations for changes in dose

Illness or procedure	Dose adjustment	Increase for	When do I seek help?
Cold – no fever	No	N/A	N/A
Fever, flu	Double dose	Duration of fever	See GP if still unwell after 48 hrs
Vomiting diarrhoea/severe illness	Double dose until emergency injection given	Resume on usual dose when well again	Phone GP, go to A&E. Administer injection (yourself, relative or GP)
Minor operation e.g Tooth extraction	20mgs before procedure	Resume usual dose after procedure	See GP if still unwell
Small operation (Hernia)	100mg injection every 6 hrs for 24hrs.	Resume usual dose afterwards	See GP if still unwell
Major operation	100mgs Hydrocortisone at time of anaesthetic.	Resume usual dose afterwards	Tell the surgeon and anaesthetist that you take hydrocortisone before the operation.

Illness or Procedure	Dose adjustment	Increase for	When do I seek help?
Colonoscopy or Barium enema	<b>Double usual dose the day before.</b> Usual dose on day of procedure. Colonoscopy only- Hydrocortisone injection given by Dr. <b>Double the dose the day after</b>	Resume usual dose on third day	Drink plenty of fluids. <b>Tell Dr that you are taking hydrocortisone prior to procedure</b>
Severe shock e.g Accident or Bereavement.	<b>Hydrocortisone injection or double usual dose if able to.</b>	Consult GP or Endocrinologist for advice	<b>If you feel unwell, go to your GP or A&amp;E.</b>
Long haul flight	<b>Double usual dose on day of flight.</b>	Take usual dose every 6-8 hours until you arrive at your destination	If unsure, contact the Endocrine Team on 020 8725 0923

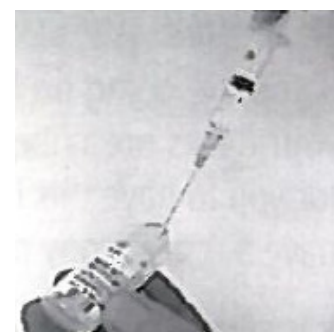
Taken with permission from the *"Pituitary Foundation Hydrocortisone Advice for Patients®"* leaflet

## How to give an emergency injection of hydrocortisone

### Powder Version: Solo-Cortef (Part 1 of 2)



- Wash and dry your hands.
- Snap open the sterile water – use a small piece of tissue to protect your fingers.



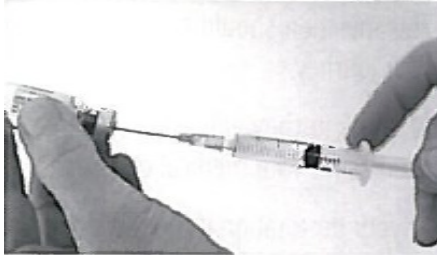
- Attach the green needle to the syringe and remove the cover.
- Withdraw 2ml of sterile water into the syringe.



- Remove the cap off the vial of hydrocortisone powder.
- Inject the water into the vial of powder.

## How to give an emergency injection of hydrocortisone.

### Powder Version: Solo-Cortef (Part 2 of 2)



- Swirl the vial until all the powder is mixed with the water.
- Withdraw the contents of the vial into the syringe.
- Pull the needle and syringe of the vial.



- Exchange the green needle for the blue needle. Use an alcohol wipe to clean the bare skin at injection site – right or left upper thigh.
- Remove the needle cover and hold the syringe

between your thumb and index finger.



- Stretch the skin slightly and push the needle in the selected site with a steady motion.
- Push plunger down so that all the liquid is injected.

- Grasp syringe and pull needle out of the thigh.
- Apply pressure to the injection site with a clean tissue for 2 minutes.

## How to give an emergency injection of hydrocortisone

### Liquid Version: Efcortisol (Part 1 of 2)



- Wash and dry your hands.
- Break open the ampoule at the dot, using a small piece of tissue to protect your fingers. Push firmly to attach the needle to the syringe and remove the cover.



- Hold the ampoule with your non-dominant hand and draw up the solution into the syringe with your other hand.
- Expel any air by pressing the plunger until a drop of liquid forms at the end of the needle.



- Remove the needle cover and hold the syringe between your thumb and index finger.

## How to give an emergency injection of hydrocortisone

### Liquid Version: Efcortisol (Part 2 of 2)

- If you are giving yourself the injection, you need to inject yourself on the same side, eg: right handed – right thigh.



- Stretch the skin slightly and push the needle in the selected site with a steady motion.
- Push plunger down so that all the liquid is injected.
- Grasp syringe and pull needle out of the thigh.
- Apply pressure to the injection site with a clean tissue for 2 minutes.

## Letter for Airlines

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Passport No: \_\_\_\_\_

I have a medical condition (adrenal failure) that I need to take steroid tablets for. In an emergency or if I am unwell, I may need to take a Hydrocortisone injection urgently; therefore I will need to take this onto the plane with me in case I need it.

Hospital Stamp

## Support Groups & Further Information

### Addisons Disease Self-Help Group

PO Box 45445  
Sydenham  
London  
SE26 6YR  
Web: [www.addisons.org.uk](http://www.addisons.org.uk)

### Pituitary Foundation

PO Box 1944  
Bristol  
BS99 2UB  
Tel: 0845 450 0375  
Web: [www.pituitary.org.uk](http://www.pituitary.org.uk)

For further advice please call  
**Endocrine Clinical Nurse Specialists**  
The Endocrine Investigation Unit  
Tel: **020 8725 0923 / 020 8725 0929**

Alternatively contact Endocrine Registrar (if it's out of office hours)  
on **020 8672 1255** Bleep **7778**  
Or NHS Direct on **0845 4647**



Produced September 2012  
Review September 2015

## Important Contact Details

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>NOK Name</b>	
<b>NOK Tel:</b>	
<b>Medication</b>	
<b>Allergies</b>	
<b>GP Tel:</b>	