

Endocrinology

Preventing an adrenal crisis (Sick day rules)

What are sick day rules?

'Sick day rules' give you advice on how to manage your usual steroid medication if you are unwell; to prevent you from having an adrenal crisis.

What is hydrocortisone?

Hydrocortisone works like naturally occurring cortisol, a steroid hormone produced by the adrenal glands. It plays a complex role in regulating body functions and is essential for survival. Hydrocortisone is taken as a replacement for the natural cortisol hormone. This is prescribed when the pituitary gland fails to produce ACTH or adrenal gland fails to produce cortisol.

Some patients may be prescribed other forms of steroids such as prednisolone.

How should I take hydrocortisone?

The usual dose of hydrocortisone is 15-20mg daily; this is taken orally and usually split over two or three times a day (eg:Early morning, 1pm and 4 pm). Hydrocortisone should be taken with water and is better absorbed if taken before food.

What if I become ill?

If you become ill or suffer injuries, your body naturally increases cortisol levels from the adrenal glands. It is therefore essential if taking replacement steroids to mimic the natural response by increasing your



Patient Information

dose appropriately as shown in the table below:

Illness/ situation	Action
Adrenal crisis – weakness, dizzy, nausea, faint, loss of consciousness	Have emergency injection if possible, dial 999 and state ‘adrenal crisis’.
Infection with a temperature of 38c or higher or taking antibiotics	Double daily dose for duration of illness/infection/course of antibiotics.
Flu or other infections that make you feel poorly	Double daily dose for duration of illness.
Road traffic accident, fall, bereavement induced shock	Double dose as soon as incident happens, If significant injury, give emergency injection.
Vomiting with/without diarrhoea	Take extra dose immediately at onset of vomiting. Emergency injection if vomiting recurs within 30 mins of taking extra dose.
Diarrhoea	Double dose until diarrhoea settles. If signs of adrenal crisis, follow advice from row 1.
Dental treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • E.g. Extraction with anaesthetic • E.g. Root canal – local anaesthetic • E.g. Filling, dental hygiene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100mg hydrocortisone IM injection just before extraction • Double dose 1 hour prior to surgery • Double dose 1 hour prior to procedure Double dose 24 hours, then return to normal.
Surgical procedures	Please inform doctor/healthcare professional you take hydrocortisone before surgery/procedure.

Patient Information

You should always seek medical advice if you need to use your emergency injection or if an increased dose of your tablets does not help to resolve your symptoms.

Travelling abroad

When traveling abroad it is advised you take a good supply of your medication, not all stored together and never stored in checked in luggage.

It is useful to take an emergency hydrocortisone injection kit with you, kept in hand luggage, with a letter from you doctor or specialist nurse explaining what the injection is for.

For long haul flights (over 12 hours), double on the day of the flight. One double the dose of Hydrocortisone should suffice.

MedicAlert

It is a good idea to purchase a 'MedicAlert' bracelet or necklace and carry a blue steroid card at all times.

Useful links

- UK Addison's Disease Self-Help Group – www.adshg.org.uk
- The pituitary Foundation – www.pituitary.org.uk
- MedicAlert – www.medicalalert.org.uk Freephone: 0800 581 420

Contact the Endocrine Specialist Nurses

If you require more information please contact the Endocrine Specialist Nurses, Monday-Friday 8:00-16:30 (answerphone service available when out-of-office) **Telephone: 02476 965983**

Patient Information

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this Information in another language or format please contact 02476 965983 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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