

## 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. This will prevent you from having an adrenal crisis.

### What is hydrocortisone?

Hydrocortisone works like naturally occurring cortisol.

Cortisol is 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 adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH)
- the adrenal gland fails to produce cortisol.

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



## Patient Information

### How should I take hydrocortisone?

The usual dose of hydrocortisone is 15 to 20mg daily. This is taken orally two or three times a day.

Hydrocortisone should be taken with water. It's better absorbed if taken before eating food.

### What if I become ill?

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

If taking replacement steroids, this is done by increasing your dose as shown in the table below:

<b>Illness/ situation</b>	<b>Action</b>
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 38°C or higher or taking antibiotics	Double your daily dose for duration of illness/infection/course of antibiotics.
Flu or other infections that make you feel poorly	Double your daily dose for the duration of illness.
Road traffic accident, fall, bereavement induced shock	Double your dose as soon as incident happens. If significant injury, use your emergency injection.
Vomiting with/without diarrhoea	Take an extra dose immediately at onset of vomiting.  Use your emergency injection if vomiting recurs within 30 mins of taking the extra dose.

## Patient Information

### Diarrhoea

Double your dose until the diarrhoea settles. If signs of adrenal crisis, follow the advice in row 1.

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### Dental treatment

- Extraction with anaesthetic
- Root canal – local anaesthetic
- Filling, dental hygiene
- 100mg hydrocortisone IM injection just before extraction
- Double dose 1 hour before surgery
- Double dose 1 hour before procedure

Double your dose for 24 hours, then return to normal.

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### Surgical procedures

Please inform doctor/healthcare professional if you take hydrocortisone before surgery/procedure.

## Seek medical advice if:

- you need to use your emergency injection
- an increased dose of your tablets does not help to resolve your symptoms

## Travelling abroad

When traveling abroad, take a good supply of your medicine. Do not store all your medicine all together. Never store your medicine in checked in luggage.

Take an emergency hydrocortisone injection kit with you. Keep this in your 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 your dose on the day of the flight.

## Patient Information

### MedicAlert

It is a good idea to purchase a 'MedicAlert' bracelet or necklace. Carry an NHS steroid emergency card at all times.

### Useful links

- UK Addison's Disease Self-Help Group – [www.adshg.org.uk](http://www.adshg.org.uk)
- The Pituitary Foundation – [www.pituitary.org.uk](http://www.pituitary.org.uk)
- MedicAlert – [www.medicalalert.org.uk](http://www.medicalalert.org.uk) Freephone: 0800 581 420

### Contact the endocrine specialist nurses

If you would like more information, contact the endocrine specialist nurses Monday to Friday, 8am to 4.30pm (An answerphone service is available out-of-hours).

**Phone: 024 7696 5983**

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#### Document History

Department:	Endocrinology
Contact:	25983
Updated:	October 2023
Review:	October 2026
Version:	2
Reference:	HIC/LFT/2526/20