

Advice for your steroid prescription (adults)

Department of Pharmacy

Information for Patients

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Introduction

Steroids (also known as corticosteroids) are man-made versions of a hormone called cortisol. This hormone is made by the adrenal glands. Cortisol controls your:

- blood sugar
- weight
- swelling (inflammation)
- bone health
- mood
- waking / sleeping

Steroids are used for 3 main reasons:

1. Reducing inflammation (anti-inflammatory).
2. Weaken the immune system (immunosuppressant) when the body is too active or attacking itself.
3. Replace hormones when the body is not making enough by itself.

How can I take steroids?

You can take steroids:

- by mouth
- inhaling or through nasal sprays
- as injections
- as creams / ointments

The dose of steroid that you need to take and how long you need to take it for will be written on the medicine label or the steroid dosage sheet. Often the lowest possible dose to control symptoms is used. Sometimes the dose maybe increased or doubled depending on your clinical condition.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

Adrenal insufficiency

- Adrenal insufficiency is where the body does not make enough cortisol.
- The adrenal glands that make cortisol are under the control of pituitary gland.
- The pituitary gland monitors the amount of cortisol in blood.
- If cortisol is low, the pituitary gland tells the adrenal glands to make more cortisol.
- If cortisol is high, the pituitary gland tells the adrenal gland to make less cortisol.
- In adrenal insufficiency, the pituitary glands and adrenal glands do not work properly.
- If you have adrenal insufficiency you will need to take steroids long term.
- Taking steroids long term will make adrenal glands lazy over time in making cortisol.
- If you are unwell, you may need extra steroids to cope with the illness and your GP or steroid specialist may advise that your dose to be increased for a few days.

Steroid dosage sheet and steroid cards

University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust
Glenfield Hospital
Department of Pharmacy
Reducing Dosage Card

Date: _____ Ward: _____

Patients Name: _____

How to take your:

Number to take	How often to take each day	How many days to take the medication for
	A day	
Then	A day	

STERIOD TREATMENT CARD

I am a patient on STEROID treatment which must not be stopped suddenly

- Always carry this card with you and show it to anyone who treats you (for example a doctor, nurse, pharmacist or dentist). For one year after you stop the treatment, you must mention that you have taken steroids.
- If you become ill, or if you come into contact with anyone who has an infectious disease consult your doctor promptly. If you have never had chickenpox, you should avoid close contact with people who have chickenpox or shingles. If you do come into contact with chickenpox, see your doctor urgently.
- Make sure that the information on the card is kept up to date.

0909 2027 70240 EN-44/0205A

Steroid Emergency Card (Adult)

IMPORTANT MEDICAL INFORMATION FOR HEALTHCARE STAFF
THIS PATIENT IS PHYSICALLY DEPENDENT ON DAILY STEROID THERAPY as a critical medicine. It must be given/taken as prescribed and never omitted or discontinued. Missed doses, illness or surgery can cause adrenal crisis requiring emergency treatment.

Patients not on daily steroid therapy or with a history of steroid usage may also require emergency treatment.

Name: Patient Name

Date of Birth State of Birth NHS Number NHS number

Why steroid prescribed: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

When calling 999 or 111, emphasize this is a likely adrenal insufficiency/ Addison's/ Addisonian crisis or emergency ASD describe symptoms (vomiting, diarrhoea, dehydration, injury/shock).

Emergency treatment of adrenal crisis

1) EITHER 100mg Hydrocortisone i.v. or i.m. injection followed by 24 hr continuous i.v. infusion of 200mg Hydrocortisone in Glucose 5%

OR 50mg Hydrocortisone i.v. or i.m. q6h (100mg if severely obese)

2) Rapid rehydration with Sodium Chloride 0.9%

3) Liaise with endocrinology team

Scan here for further information or search <https://www.endocrinology.org/adrenal-crisis>

- We give a steroid dosage sheet (yellow) if you are on a reducing course of steroids. This can be for short and long term courses.
- We may issue you 2 different types of steroid cards: a blue card and a red card.
- A blue card is the normal steroid card. A red card is an emergency steroid card.
- A blue card guides you on to how to lower risks when taking steroids. It also gives details of prescriber, drug and dosage.
- A red steroid emergency card helps healthcare staff. They will know you have adrenal insufficiency when admitted in an emergency or undergoing a procedure. This makes sure your steroid treatment is given correctly and on time. The card outlines steps to take in an emergency. It also explains why you take steroids and has emergency contact details.

Taking steroid replacement therapy

- Cortisol is like body's alarm clock. The cortisol level rises during early hours reaching a peak at 8am. The high level gives the body energy to wake up.
- During the day, cortisol levels drop slowly. This signals the day is coming to an end.
- Cortisol levels are lowest at around midnight. The levels then start to rise again for the next day.
- Your doctor will tell you the best time to take steroids. This is so you can get the most out of it.
- Steroid tablets may irritate the stomach. You should take steroid tablets with food. Your doctor may prescribe medicines which protect the stomach as a preventative measure.
- Try not to take non-steroidal anti-inflammatory pain killers like ibuprofen, diclofenac and naproxen. These can increase risk of stomach ulcers with steroids.
- When taking steroid tablets in the evening, please make sure you take them 4 hours before bedtime. This is to lower any affect on your sleep.
- Your doctor or other healthcare professionals will check if any other medicines interfere with steroids before prescribing.

Symptoms of low steroid levels

- Tired
- Light headedness
- Headaches
- Joint aches
- Thirsty

Tips to stop low steroid levels

- Always take steroids at the same time each day.
- Never stop steroids suddenly.
- Always have enough supply of steroid medicines.
- Follow the advice of the doctor carefully when stopping steroids.
- Make sure you understand when you may need to take extra steroid doses.
- If you have any questions please ask your prescriber or your GP.



Symptoms of adrenal crisis

- Sudden pain
- Severe nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Sweating
- Cold and clammy
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Confusion

Please call 999 if you have an adrenal crisis and show medical staff your emergency steroid card (red card).

Contact details

Please call inpatient pharmacy department **0116 258 5566** and select the hospital you were discharged from for more information or if you have any further questions about your steroid medication.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email uhl-tr.equalitymailbox@nhs.net