



Isle of Man
Government

Keitrys Eilan Vannin

Department of Health and Social Care

Rbeyn Slaynt as Kiarail y Theay

Sick Day Rules

Information **for** patients on **long-term steroid** hormone
replacement therapy
(Hydrocortisone, Prednisolone, Dexamethasone)

What is the purpose of ‘sick day rules’?

- ‘Sick day rules’ help prevent *Adrenal (Addisonian) Crisis* by appropriate management of steroid medication if you are unwell (for example, if you have the ‘flu’) or you can’t keep your tablets down due to sickness. Additionally if you are undergoing any medical or surgical procedure the steroid management needs discussion with the endocrine team.

What is hydrocortisone?

- Hydrocortisone works like naturally occurring cortisol, a steroid hormone we need for life. It is the most commonly used steroid prescribed to patients requiring replacement therapy for adrenal insufficiency. Cortisol plays many vital roles in maintaining and regulating healthy body functions and is essential for survival.
- Some patients may be prescribed with different forms of steroids (for example; prednisolone or dexamethasone – these are longer acting steroids) depending on their needs.

What is the usual hydrocortisone treatment?

- The usual dose of hydrocortisone is 15–25 milligrams split in two to three doses throughout the day. Hydrocortisone is taken orally.
- Hydrocortisone can be taken on an empty stomach or with food.
- The first dose should be taken immediately after waking up, the second dose after lunch and if you take a third dose, it *should not be taken after 5pm* as this may disturb your sleep.

What happens when a person becomes unwell ?

- If we become ill, our body would naturally increase the output of steroid hormones from the adrenals (glands). Those who are taking replacement steroids will need to mimic the natural response by increasing their steroid dose appropriately to prevent *Adrenal (Addisonian) Crisis*
- Remember that taking a higher dose of steroids for a short period of time whilst you are ill is necessary and is not harmful. You do not need to change the doses

of any other hormone tablets you take regularly.

What is an Adrenal Or Addisonian Crisis

It is a **Medical Emergency** in which people with Addison's Disease (or anyone who is "steroid-dependent") may experience symptoms of

- Extreme weakness, feeling terrible, vomiting, headache
- Light-headedness or dizziness on sitting up or standing up
- Feeling very cold, uncontrollable shaking; back, limb or abdominal pain
- Confusion, drowsiness, loss of consciousness

This is known as an **Adrenal (Addisonian) Crisis** and means *they need extra steroid medication immediately, in the form of an emergency injection of intra-muscular hydrocortisone.*

Seek immediate medical attention - **Call 999, stating Adrenal (Addisonian) Crisis**

SICK DAY RULES

A. *If you are being sick and cannot keep your steroid tablets down*

- Call Emergency medical services immediately
- You must have an emergency intramuscular injection of HYDROCORTISONE 100MG AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

B. If you are unwell with fever requiring bed rest and/or antibiotics and **able to hold your steroid tablets down you need to double your dose** of oral steroid medication as per the guidance provided below and seek advice.

Double your dose of steroids for few days and then go back to your usual dose once feeling better.

For example: if you take hydrocortisone 10mg on waking, 5mg at midday and 5mg in the evening increase these to 20mg, 10mg and 10mg respectively.

Steroid Management around Surgical / Medical / Dental procedures

Sick day rules for long-term steroid use, Endocrine department, Nobles Hospital 08/04/2020

For major or minor surgical procedures including dental treatment and medical invasive procedures for example upper and lower camera test (endoscopy/ colonoscopy), bronchoscopy, labour and vaginal birth please asks your treating doctor to consult the endocrine team for steroid management advice.

You and your doctor can download the
SURGICAL GUIDELINES FOR ADDISON'S DISEASE
AND
OTHER FORMS
OF ADRENAL
INSUFFICIENCY

From the following website
www.addisons.org.uk/surgery

Travelling abroad

- When travelling abroad, it is advised that you take twice the amount of steroids you need in case you have to double your dose due to illness.
- It is also useful to take a hydrocortisone injection kit with you in case of emergency. You can get this kit from your Endocrinologist or your GP. If travelling abroad, you will need a letter from your doctor or specialist nurse explaining what the injection kit is for.
- It is a good idea to purchase a 'MedicAlert' bracelet or necklace and carry a blue steroid card at all times.

For any queries and advice please contact:

- **Your hospital key worker:** Endocrine secretary

Tel: 650877, 650866

- **UK Addison's Disease Self Help Group**

www.addisonsdisease.org.uk

- **The Pituitary Foundation**

www.pituitary.org.uk

- **Medic Alert**

www.medicalert.org.uk

info@medicalert.org.uk

Freephone: 01908 951045

Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.

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