



Information for
patients and
carers

Long Term Steroid Treatment
Sick Day Rules

People taking long term oral steroids may need to take higher doses during periods of being unwell. This leaflet will provide you with information about when to increase your steroid dose.

Long term steroid treatment

The body naturally produces a steroid hormone called cortisol from the adrenal glands. This hormone is very important for health. When you are taking certain types of steroid treatment your body will recognise that there is enough steroid in your system and stop producing its own cortisol from the adrenal glands. This will not lead to problems whilst you are well and taking the steroid treatment regularly. However, when you are on treatment for more than a month, the ability of your body to start producing cortisol can become impaired. This means that if you stop your steroid treatment suddenly you can become unwell due to a lack of cortisol.

In addition, when your body is under physical stress (illness, surgery, trauma etc.) it will normally produce extra cortisol as part of the response to that stress. This can be impaired in patients on long term steroids.

Important safety measures for steroids

1. Never stop taking your steroids suddenly unless advised to by a doctor
2. If you are unable to take your regular steroid treatment (e.g. vomiting) then you should seek medical attention
3. If you become unwell (*see below) you may need to double your dose of steroids until you start to feel better. This depends on the dose of steroid that you are taking. If you are taking a large dose of steroid (Prednisolone 10mg or above per day, Dexamethasone 1mg or above per day, Hydrocortisone 40mg or above per day) then doubling the dose should not be necessary. Your doctor will be able to advise you

When to increase steroid dose

* If you become unwell then you should double your dose of steroids until you start to feel better.

Scenarios where this may apply include:

- Infection with a temperature over 38°C
- Infection with a need for antibiotics
- Infection and confined to bed
- Diarrhoea and/or vomiting
- Significant injury (e.g. broken bone)
- Major dental work
- Surgery

Sources of further information

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk

www.nhs.uk

www.patient.co.uk

www.accessable.co.uk

All our patient information leaflets are available on our website for patients to access and download:

www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is not responsible for the content of external internet sites.

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals is a smoke-free site. Smoking is not permitted anywhere on any of our premises, either inside or outside the buildings. Our staff will ask you about your smoking status when you come to hospital and will offer you support and advice about stopping smoking including Nicotine Replacement Therapy to help manage your symptoms of withdrawal.

If you want to stop smoking you can also contact the Quit Squad Freephone 0800 328 6297.

Please ask if you would like help in understanding this information. This information can be made available in large print and in other languages.

Gujarati:

આ માહિતીને સમજવામાં સહાયતા જોઈતી હોય તો કૃપા કરીને પૂછો. આ માહિતી મોટા છપાણામાં અને અન્ય ભાષામાં ઉપલબ્ધ કરી શકાય છે.

Romanian:

Vă rugăm să întrebați dacă aveți nevoie de ajutor pentru înțelegerea acestor informații. Aceste informații pot fi puse la dispoziție în format mare și în alte limbi."

Polish:

Poinformuj nas, jeśli potrzebna jest ci pomoc w zrozumieniu tych informacji. Informacje te można również udostępnić dużym drukiem oraz w innych językach

Punjabi:

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਸਮਝਣ ਵੱਲ ਮਦਦ ਲੈਣੀ ਚਾਹੋਗੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇਸ ਬਾਰੇ ਪੁੱਛੋ। ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਵੱਡੇ ਪ੍ਰਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵੱਲ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ।

Urdu:

دو سرى زبانون او ريزى اكر آپ كو هي معلومات سمجھنے کے لیے مدد كى ضرورت ہے تو
يىچھيا ىمن يہ ابى دست ہو يىسكت ہے برا ے مہر يان پو ے يچھہ ي معلومات

Arabic:

مطبوعه بأحر ف كبيره و بلغات إذا كنت تر يد مساعده فى فهم هذه لمعلومات يُر جى أن تطلب
أخرى يملكن تو فيير هذه المعلومات

Department: Endocrinology

Division: Medicine

Production date: May 2021

Review date: May 2024

JR631 v1