



Sick Day Rules

Dexamethasone

for patients taking dexamethasone for
Treatment of Inflammatory Disorders



Content



Illness
page 4 - 13



**Dental and Medical
procedures**
Pages 14 - 19



Having a baby
Pages 20 - 21



Life events
Pages 22 - 29

Illness

How you take your dexamethasone tablets when you are unwell depends on:

The total amount of dexamethasone you take in a day and if your doctor has given you another steroid called hydrocortisone to use when you are poorly.

Instructions on using your dexamethasone alone or combined with hydrocortisone tablets when unwell are given:



Vomiting and/or diarrhoea

Take extra 0.75mg dexamethasone (or 20mg hydrocortisone) after vomiting or diarrhoea. If you vomit again or have more diarrhoea, go to hospital or call 999.



Mild illness – no fever (e.g. common cold etc)

Continue to take your normal dose of dexamethasone as usual.



Infection and Fever

Mild infection with fever (temperature 38-39°C)

Dexamethasone tablets only

Follow the directions below until you feel better:

Total daily dose dexamethasone	When unwell
1mg or less	Take 2mg dexamethasone
More than 1mg	Take normal dose of dexamethasone

Dexamethasone in combination with hydrocortisone

Follow the directions below until you feel better:

Total daily dose dexamethasone	When unwell
1mg or less	Take normal dose of dexamethasone and Take extra 20mg of hydrocortisone immediately, then 10mg every 6 hours
More than 1mg	Take normal dose of dexamethasone

Serious infection with fever

(temperature above 39°C)

Take 3mg of dexamethasone (or 50mg hydrocortisone) and go to hospital or call 999.

COVID-19

(suspected or confirmed)

Dexamethasone tablets only

Follow the directions below until you feel better:

Total daily dose dexamethasone	When unwell
Less than 2mg	Take 2mg dexamethasone
2mg or more	Take normal dose of dexamethasone

Dexamethasone in combination with hydrocortisone

Regardless of your dexamethasone dose, until you feel better:

- Take normal dose of dexamethasone and
- Take extra 20mg hydrocortisone every 6 hours.





Serious signs and symptoms

You will need a steroid injection if you have:

- More than one bout of vomiting and/or diarrhoea
- Injury
- No improvement of illness
- Symptoms of adrenal insufficiency/crisis:
 - Sudden pain – stomach, back, legs, muscles
 - Severe nausea and/or vomiting
 - Severe diarrhoea
 - Sweating – cold, clammy skin
 - Severe headache
 - Dizziness
 - Drowsiness
 - Confusion
 - Collapse

Go to hospital immediately or call 999 and state adrenal crisis. Show staff your Emergency Steroid Card.

Your doctor may have given you an emergency steroid injection. If so, use the injection as instructed. Call 999 and state Adrenal Crisis. Show your emergency steroid card.

Dental & Medical Procedures

Always tell health care staff (doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, chiropodists/podiatrists etc.) that you are taking steroids. If you need a procedure, your health care professional will give you instructions on how to take your steroid medicines before and after the procedure. The healthcare professional may also give you a steroid injection at the time of the procedure. It is very important health care staff know that you are taking steroids so that they can plan your care. Here are some general rules to follow if you are having a procedure:



Dental procedures

Procedure	Before	After
Minor dental work or surgical procedure Eg. replacement filling, scale and polish	Take extra 0.75mg of dexamethasone (or 20mg hydrocortisone) 1 hour before appointment for procedure	Take extra 0.75mg dexamethasone (or 20mg hydrocortisone) after treatment if you feel dizzy, drowsy, sick, sweaty or shivery
Dental surgery Eg. root canal work with local anaesthetic	Take extra 0.75mg of dexamethasone (or 20mg hydrocortisone) 1 hour before appointment for procedure	Take double your usual dose of dexamethasone for 24 hours after, then reduce to your normal dose.
Major dental surgery Eg. tooth extraction with anaesthetic	Discuss steroid requirements with your dentist and doctor when planning your procedure. Steroid injection may be necessary	Take double your usual dose of dexamethasone for 24 hours after, then reduce to your normal dose.

Surgical procedures

Procedure	Before	After
Bowel procedures with laxatives (e.g. magic eye of the bowel (colonoscopy), barium enema etc.)	Take your steroid tablets as normal. Doctor will give you steroid injection before and during the procedure.	Take double your normal dose of dexamethasone for 24 hours. Then return to your normal dose.
Surgery under anaesthetic	Take your steroid tablets as normal. Doctor will give you steroid injections before and during the procedure.	Your doctor will give you steroid injections until you can eat and drink. Once eating and drinking, take double your normal dose of dexamethasone until your doctor tells you to return to your normal dose. If you take double your normal dose for 1 week after the procedure, you will need to reduce your steroid dose back down to your normal dose gradually. Your doctor will give you instructions on how to reduce your dexamethasone gradually back to your normal dose.



Having a baby

Dexamethasone is safe to use when having a baby and breast-feeding.
Dexamethasone will not cause harm to you or the baby.

Other steroid medicines are found to work better than dexamethasone
in pregnant ladies.

If you become pregnant when taking dexamethasone, continue to take
your steroids as normal. Contact your doctor immediately and inform
them that you are taking dexamethasone. Your doctor will arrange an
appointment to review your steroid medicines. The doctor may change
you to a different steroid medicine to give you the best treatment during
pregnancy.

Follow the advice given to you by your doctor during pregnancy.

Life events

People taking steroids often ask whether they need to change how they take their steroids when they are under emotional, mental and physical stress from everyday life. Here is some general advice about taking your steroids:



Vaccines

Continue to take your dexamethasone at the normal dose. If you feel unwell after vaccination, follow the sick day rules.



Travelling abroad

Continue to take your dexamethasone at the normal dose and time interval. Always take at least double the supplies that you need for the duration of your holiday. Keep at least one week's supply in your hand luggage.



Cosmetic procedures

(e.g. piercings and tattoos).

Before procedure: Continue to take your dexamethasone at the normal dose. If procedure is likely to take a long time, take an extra 0.75mg dexamethasone (or 20mg hydrocortisone) 1 hour before procedure.

After procedure: If you feel dizzy, drowsy, nauseous, sick, sweaty or shivery, take an extra 0.75mg dexamethasone (or 20mg hydrocortisone).



Sports and exercise

Continue to take your dexamethasone at the normal dose. Speak to your doctor before planning to take part in intensive/endurance sport. e.g Marathon



Mental and emotional stress

Continue to take your dexamethasone at the normal dose.



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For patients taking dexamethasone for Treatment of Inflammatory Disorders.

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