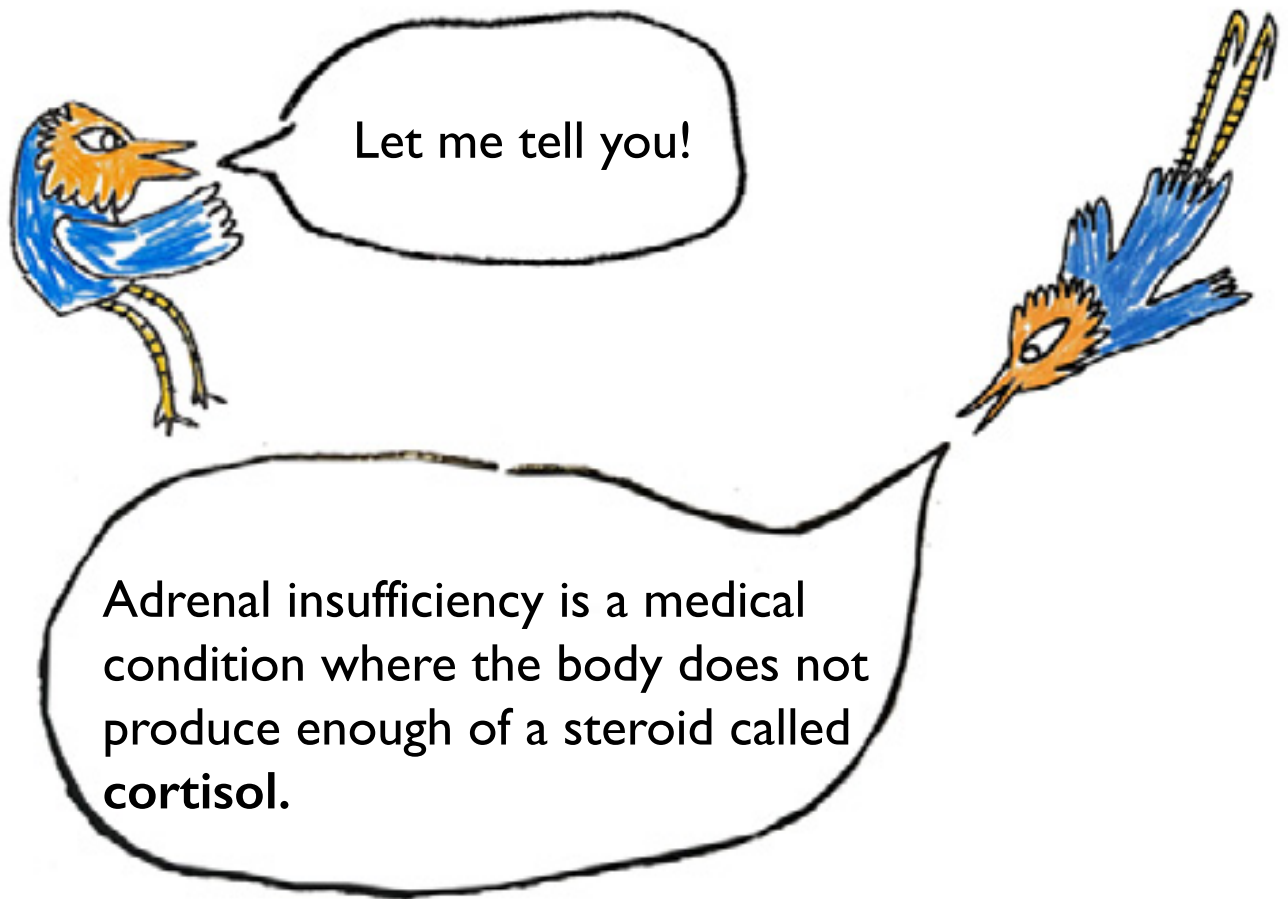


What is **Steroid Induced Adrenal Insufficiency?**



GIG
CYMRU
NHS
WALES



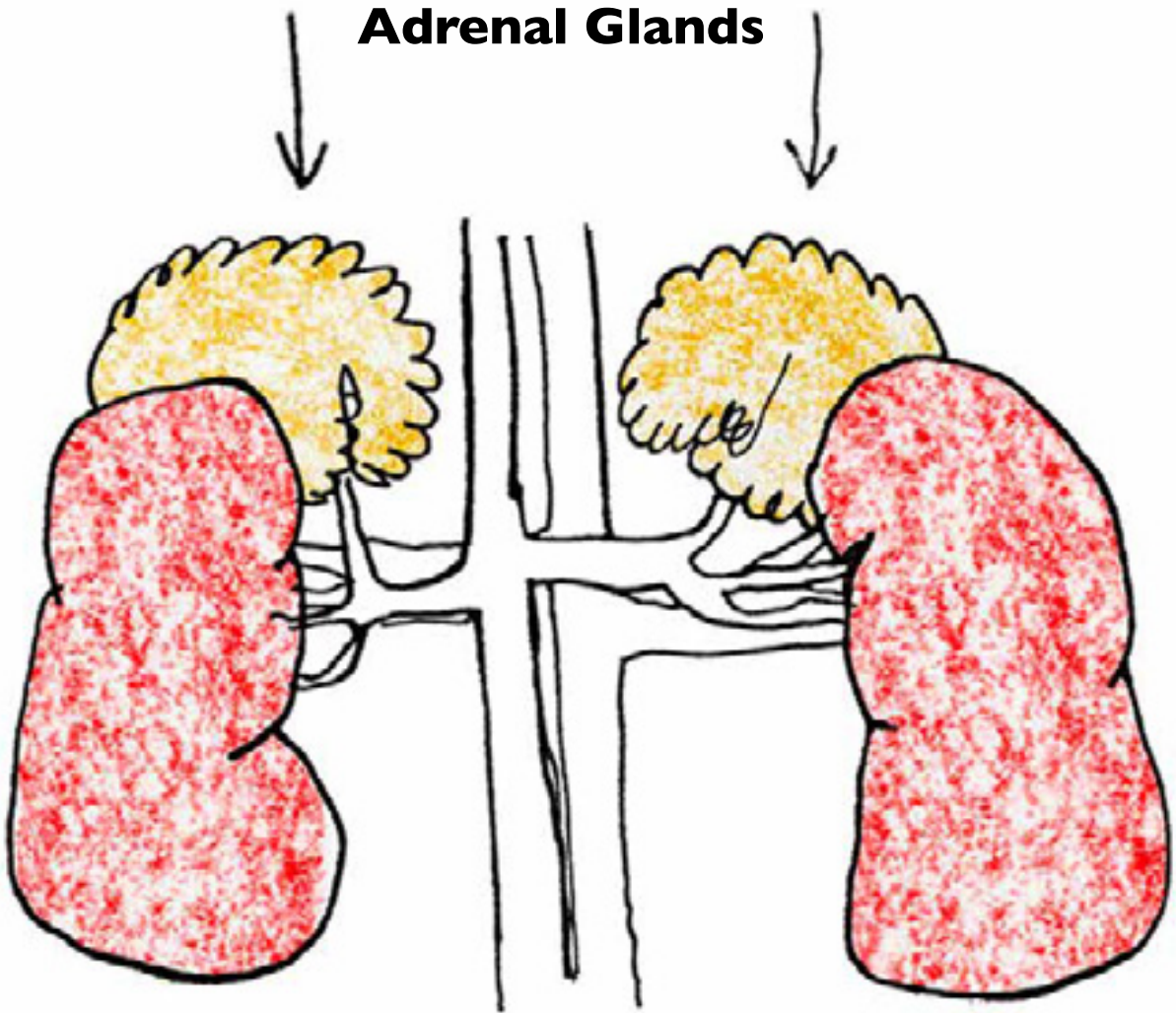
Cortisol is a steroid hormone that is essential for life!
It controls blood sugar, weight, blood pressure, inflammation, bone health, mood and waking/sleeping.



Cortisol is made by the adrenal glands, found on top of each kidney on either side of the body.




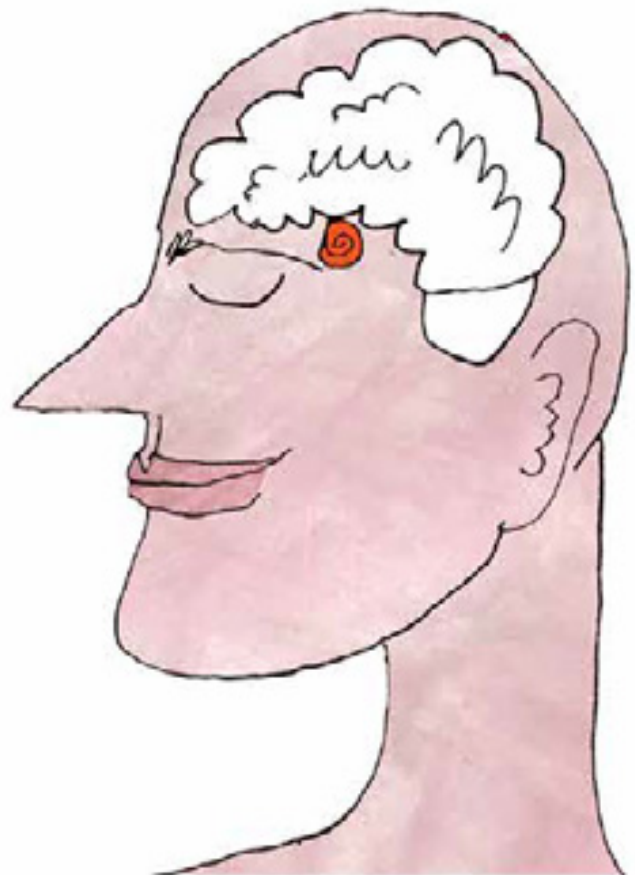
Adrenal Glands



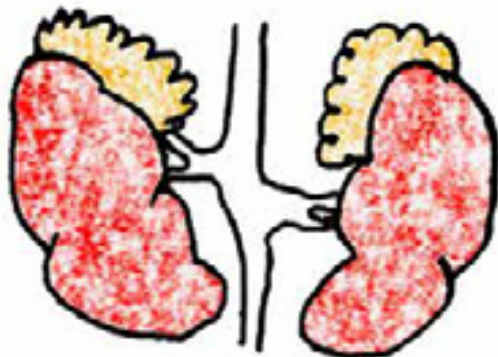


The pituitary gland is a pea-size gland at the base of the brain. It monitors the amount of cortisol in the blood.

 Pituitary Gland



If the amount of cortisol in the blood drops too low, or becomes too high, the pituitary gland will send a message to the adrenal glands to make more or less cortisol.



Steroid medicines, like prednisolone, hydrocortisone, dexamethasone, beclomethasone and fluticasone, are copies of the natural cortisol produced by the body. Steroid medicines are used to treat different conditions such as asthma, arthritis, skin conditions, Crohn's and Colitis and after transplant surgery.

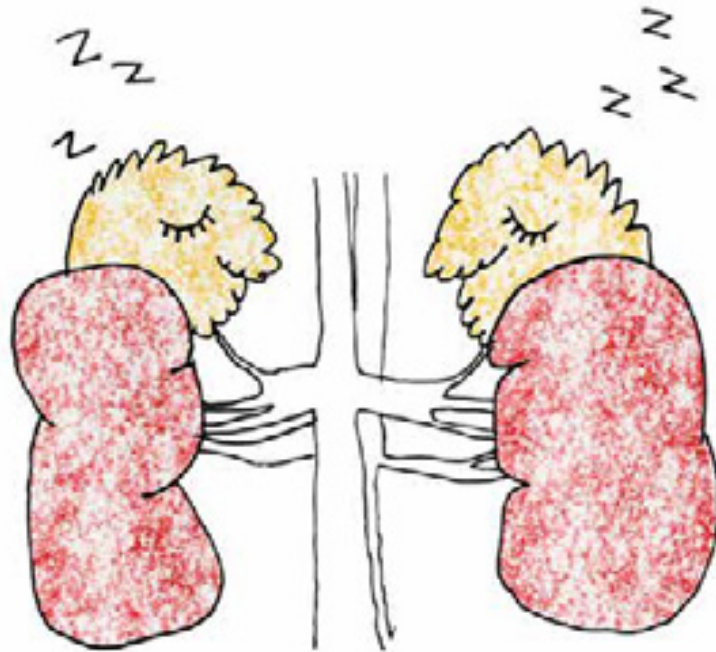


Using steroid medicines increases the amount of steroid in your blood stream.

Then, the pituitary gland detects the high level of steroid in the blood and sends a message to the adrenal gland to make less cortisol.



The adrenal glands can become lazy if you take a high dose of steroid medicines or take steroids medicines over a long time.



Now, when your body needs extra cortisol, the adrenal glands are slow to respond.



They may not make enough cortisol for your body!

Now the amount of cortisol in the blood is too low for the body. This is called “Steroid Induced Adrenal Insufficiency.”

Low steroid levels can make a person feel unwell. This can easily be prevented by following some simple rules on taking steroid medicines.



This guide will help you stop getting low steroid levels by knowing:



- when steroid levels are likely to become low



- how to stop your steroid levels from becoming low



- signs of low steroid levels in the blood



- what to do if you are showing signs of low steroid levels



Preventing low steroid levels (Adrenal Insufficiency)

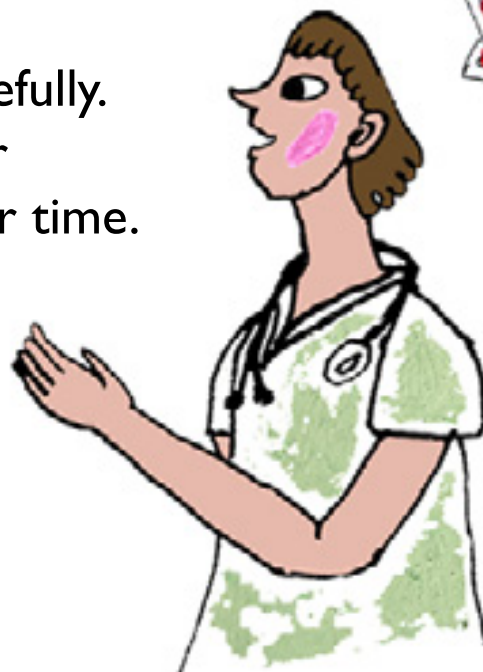
Steroid levels can become too low if you suddenly stop taking your steroid medicines, so:

-Always take your steroid medicines at the same time of day.

-Never stop your steroid medicines suddenly.

-Always have plenty of supplies of your steroid medicine so you never run out.

-When stopping steroid medicines, follow your doctor and pharmacist's instructions carefully. Your doctor will reduce your steroid dose very slowly over time.





Extra doses of your steroid medicines can be taken to top-up the steroid levels that your body needs to deal with the bug, surgery or injury. Taking extra doses when you are unwell is known as the “ **Steroid Sick Day Rules**”

Taking extra doses of your steroid for a short-time when unwell is **not** harmful. The extra doses replace what the lazy adrenal gland would normally produce at times of illness.

Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will give you the “**Steroid Sick Day Rules**” that you should follow for your steroid medicine.

It’s really important that you understand these rules and if you have any questions, ask your **doctor, nurse or pharmacist.**



STEROID
SICK DAY
RULES!



When you are unwell, you can prevent your steroid levels from becoming too low by:



Immediately start following the **“Steroid Sick Day Rules”** given to you by your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. (Don’t wait for an appointment with your doctor to do this.)



Contact your doctor when you feel unwell and tell them about your symptoms, that you are taking steroids and you are following the **“Steroid Sick Day Rules.”**



3.

Always have plenty of supplies of your steroid medicines, in case you feel unwell and need to follow the “Steroid Sick Day Rules.”



4.

Always tell your doctor, nurse, dentist, pharmacist and other healthcare professionals **before** having any treatment that you take steroids. **Show them your Steroid Treatment Card.**

Some people who have been diagnosed with an adrenal crisis in the past or considered at high risk of having an adrenal crisis may be supplied an emergency hydrocortisone (steroid) injection kit. **If necessary**, your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will supply the hydrocortisone injection kit and teach you how to use the injection.

Symptoms of Low Steroid Levels Adrenal Insufficiency and Crisis

Symptoms of low steroid levels are:

- Headaches
- Joint aches
- Low blood sugar – feeling wobbly, irritable, faint, difficulty concentrating.
- Loss of appetite and feeling a little bit sick
- Thirsty
- Tired
- Light-headed or a little bit dizzy

Left untreated, your steroid levels can become seriously low! This is called adrenal crisis.





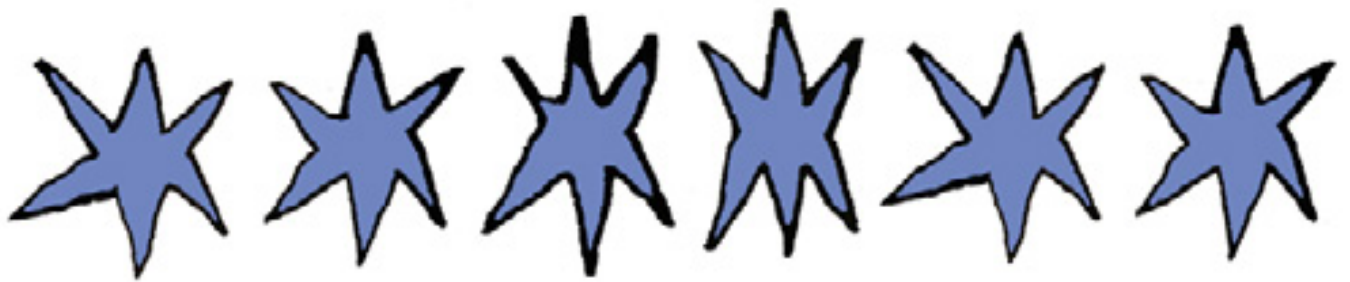
Signs of adrenal crisis are:

- Sudden pain
- Severe nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Sweating
- Cold & clammy
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Drowsiness
- Confusion
- Collapse

If you have symptoms of adrenal crisis, go to hospital immediately or call 999 and state adrenal crisis. Show staff your Steroid Treatment Card.



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



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