



## How to contact us

### Normal working hours (9am to 5pm):

The Endocrine Team      0161 446 3479

### At other times (5pm to 9am):

You should first contact your own General Practitioner  
or

go to your local Accident & Emergency Department

If necessary, ring The Christie switchboard on 0161 446 3000 and  
ask for the Nurse Practitioner on call.

Department of Endocrinology

## Taking long-term steroid replacement medication

We hope you will find this important information useful and easy  
to understand. You will be seen by the specialist nurse when this  
medication is prescribed. They will give further explanations as  
necessary.

If you have any further questions, or are worried about any aspect  
of your treatment, please talk to us.

**Contact numbers are on the back of this leaflet**

If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact Pa-  
tient.Information@christie.nhs.uk

## You have been prescribed a long term hormone replacement medication called 'Hydrocortisone'

### Why do you need medication?

You need the steroid hormone Cortisol for every-day living, and you need extra amounts in times of physical or mental stress or illness.

You have a condition which has altered your body's ability to produce this hormone.

You may also have had surgery or other treatments which can make this medication necessary.

### When do I take the medication?

It is important that you take your Hydrocortisone tablets at times which copy the way nature would produce the hormone for you. This production starts very early and decreases slowly throughout the day, with a small boost at lunchtime, and a second smaller peak at around teatime. None is made, or needed, at night whilst you are sleeping.

**Take your first tablet immediately on first waking, before you do anything else.**

**As with natural production, the hydrocortisone only remains active in your body for about 5 to 6 hours, therefore:**

**Take the second dose about lunchtime.**

**Take the last dose of the day at about 5pm.**

It is best not to take this medication any later than 6pm, because you do not need this medication during your sleeping hours. If taken too late it can cause sleeplessness.

Natural production of this hormone is increased in times of physical or mental stress, so, if at any time you have a special occasion, or are travelling across time zones, a small extra dose can be taken to mimic this extra natural production.

### What to do if you are ill

**It is important that when you are unwell you are aware of the special rules about taking this medication and that you follow them. Always keep a good supply of tablets because:**

- If you are unwell you must **double** your normal dose of Hydrocortisone. If you have a cold or a minor illness, depending upon how you feel, you may not need an immediate double dose. If in doubt however it will not cause you any harm to double your dose once or twice.
- If you are dizzy or have a temperature, double your medication for one or two days or until you are feeling better. **Then return to your normal dose.**
- If you have more than one episode of vomiting or have diarrhoea, and know your medication is not staying long enough in your body, and therefore will not be absorbed, you should administer the emergency injection. The Christie staff will give you the emergency injection pack, with an explanation of when, why and how to use it.

**If you need to use this injection, you must go to your local hospital's accident and emergency department within the hour. Take the pack with you.**

This injection may make you feel better quite quickly, but like the tablets it has a limited time of action, so you may feel ill again later. A doctor needs to make sure that your condition is continuing to improve. You will need to get a replacement pack from the hospital as soon as possible.

You **must obtain** a Medic Alert bracelet or necklace (phone 0800 0556504) which is linked to a database. Information about the recommended supplier is included with this leaflet. You can obtain a simpler medical alert medallion at pharmacists, H Samuel jewellers and some supermarkets. You will also be given a steroid card to carry at all times.

**The information contained in these medallions could save your life in an emergency situation.**