

Department of Endocrinology

Sick day rules

COVID-19 and the risk and management of adrenal insufficiency in patients on long-term steroid therapy

As you will be aware it is important for you to increase your steroid (hydrocortisone or prednisolone) dose if you become unwell. You should already have received information and training in the 'sick day rules' and specific advice regarding COVID-19.

Based on new international guidance, we have updated our COVID-19 advice and in particular increased the recommended doses of steroid when sick.

If you develop the following symptoms:

- fever >37.7°C
- a new or continuous dry cough
- breathlessness
- sore throat
- loss of sense of smell or taste
- aches and pains and/or severe fatigue

Do the following:

1. If you are currently receiving treatment for your cancer, or have recently completed treatment, please call The Christie Hotline **0161 446 3658** (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).
2. Increase your steroid dose to:
Hydrocortisone 20 mg four times daily at 6:00h, 12:00h, 18:00h, 24:00h
(if on Plenadren, switch to hydrocortisone, as above).

or

Prednisolone
less than 20 mg per day - increase to 10 mg every 12 hours
more than 20 mg per day - continue your usual dose but take it split into two equal doses
3. If on fludrocortisone - continue at usual dose
4. Contact the Endocrine department on:
Monday till Friday 9am – 4pm - call **0161 446 3479** option 3,
at other times call The Christie Hotline on **0161 446 3658**



General advice:

- Please ensure you have sufficient supplies of your hydrocortisone or prednisolone (and paracetamol) to cover increased doses if necessary **and an up to date emergency injection of hydrocortisone 100mg.**
- Drink plenty of fluid and make sure you are passing urine regularly. You may need to wake in the night to keep drinking whilst the fever is high.
- Take paracetamol 1gm 6 hourly until your fever settles.
- If you feel cold hands and feet, or dizzy on sitting or standing, increase fluid intake.

If you are short of breath, breathing fast, unable to talk in sentences or your breathing is getting worse call 111 or 999 and administer 100mg intramuscular emergency hydrocortisone injection

Symptoms of concern, which typically occur 7-10 days after onset of the first COVID-associated symptoms, include:

- feeling very dizzy when sitting or standing
- feeling very thirsty despite drinking regularly
- feeling very cold
- shaking uncontrollably
- becoming drowsy, confused or difficult to wake up
- developing vomiting or severe diarrhoea
- increasing shortness of breath with fast breathing (respiratory rate >24/min) or
- difficulty speaking in complete sentences.

Please do not hesitate to contact medical emergency services by calling 111 or 999, if your symptoms of COVID-19 significantly worsen or consider making your own way to hospital and take 100mg emergency hydrocortisone injection.

The NHS online coronavirus service is accessible from: 111.nhs.uk/covid-19/

If hospital attendance is recommended, you should increase your hydrocortisone replacement to 50 mg orally every 6 hours whilst awaiting hospital assessment.

If you are admitted to hospital very unwell, we recommend:

1. Hydrocortisone 100mg per iv injection followed by continuous iv infusion of 200mg hydrocortisone/24h (alternatively 50mg every 6h per intravenous or intramuscular bolus injection)
2. Pause fludrocortisone
3. Intravenous fluid

Please show the medical team looking after you in hospital this letter.

Further information

You can download the new **NHS emergency steroid card** from this Society for Endocrinology link: www.endocrinology.org

Advice for patients with adrenal insufficiency (Pituitary and adrenal causes)
www.endocrinology.org

Patient information

The Pituitary Foundation: www.pituitary.org.uk
Addison's Disease self help group: www.addisons.org.uk

Coronavirus vulnerable adult advice

Patients who take steroids for endocrine conditions are at increased risk of severe illness from coronavirus (COVID-19). The government has issued guidance that patients on hydrocortisone and prednisolone should be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures and advise people to work from home, where possible.

Full measures are:

1. Avoid contact with someone who is displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (see page 1).
2. Avoid non-essential use of public transport.
3. Work from home, where possible. Your employer should support you to do this. Please refer to employer guidance for more information
4. Avoid large and small gatherings in public spaces, noting that pubs, restaurants, leisure centres and similar venues are currently shut as infections spread easily in closed spaces where people gather together.
5. Avoid gatherings with friends and family. Keep in touch using remote technology such as phone, internet, and social media
6. Use telephone or online services to contact your GP or other essential services

Please read here for more detailed information.

www.gov.uk

Please note this is NOT the same advice as for the shielded category of patients.

NHS Coronavirus advice links:

www.nhs.uk

www.gov.uk

Links for Diabetes Insipidus

ec.bioscientifica.com

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **patient.information@christie.nhs.uk**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week