



THE ENDOCRINOLOGY GROUP, PLLC

Specializing in diabetes, thyroid, bone, lipid, and other hormonal disorders

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE ADRENAL INSUFFICIENCY

If you have a diagnosis of adrenal insufficiency (either from adrenal or pituitary gland problems), treatment may involve taking prescription corticosteroids. Because your body isn't producing sufficient steroid hormones, your doctor may have you take one or more hormones to replace the deficiency. Cortisol is replaced using hydrocortisone (Cortef), prednisone or cortisone.

You take these hormones orally in daily doses that mimic the amount your body normally would make, thereby minimizing side effects.

Stress dose steroids:

If you're facing a medically stressful situation, such as an operation, an infection or a minor illness, your doctor will suggest a temporary increase in your dosage. **If you're ill with vomiting and can't retain oral medications, you may need corticosteroid injections.** A person with Addison's disease also should know how to increase medication during periods of stress or mild upper respiratory infections. In general, patients should double their dose of hydrocortisone with illness, including upper respiratory tract infections, and to notify their physician when they are ill. **Immediate medical attention is needed when severe infections, vomiting, or diarrhea occur.**

Addisonian crisis

An addisonian crisis is a life-threatening situation from an inadequate amount of steroid hormones - that results in low blood pressure, low blood levels of sugar and high blood levels of potassium. This situation requires immediate medical care. Treatment typically includes intravenous injections hydrocortisone, intravenous dextrose (sugar) and fluids.

Medic-Alert Bracelet/Necklace:

A person who has adrenal insufficiency should always carry identification stating his or her condition in case of an emergency. The card should alert emergency personnel about the need to inject 100 mg of cortisol if its bearer is found severely injured or unable to answer questions. The card should also include the doctor's name and telephone number and the name and telephone number of the nearest relative to be notified. When traveling, a needle, syringe, and an injectable form of cortisol should be carried for emergencies.