

Patient information factsheet

Diabetes and steroid therapy

We have given you this factsheet because you have diabetes and are due to start steroid therapy. Steroids can increase blood glucose (sugar) levels, which can make it more difficult for people with diabetes to keep their blood glucose under good control.

This factsheet explains how we will help you to manage your blood glucose before and during your steroid therapy treatment. We hope it helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What are steroids?

Steroids (also known as corticosteroids) are an artificial version of hormones that your body usually naturally makes. They help reduce swelling (inflammation) and stop your immune system from attacking itself. They can be used to help manage symptoms from a number of conditions, including types of brain tumour.

Why do I need steroid therapy?

Your doctor will have explained to you why they have recommended you start steroid therapy. If you have any questions about this, please speak to your doctor.

How do steroids affect blood glucose?

Steroids increase the release of glucose from your liver, which makes it harder for you to control your blood glucose levels after and between meals. Steroids also increase your insulin resistance (when the cells in your body don't respond as they should to the hormone insulin), so you will need more insulin to achieve blood glucose control.

Why is it important to have good control of my blood glucose?

Keeping your blood glucose levels well-controlled while you receive steroid therapy can help to:

- reduce your risk of infection and other side effects
- improve your overall wellbeing

What will happen before I start the treatment?

We will discuss steroid therapy with you in more detail during your neuro-oncology clinic appointment and answer any questions you may have. If you are happy to go ahead with the treatment, we will give you:

- a prescription for the steroid medication and explain how and when to take it
- a blood glucose monitor (if you don't already have one) so that you can check your own blood glucose levels at home (we will show you how to use this monitor and advise how often you will need to check your blood glucose levels while having steroid therapy)

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Blood tests

Before you start steroid therapy, we will arrange for you to have some blood tests (glucose and HbA1c) to check how well your diabetes is currently controlled.

If your test results show that your blood glucose levels could be improved, we may refer you to a diabetes specialist for help with this. We will discuss this with you, if applicable.

What will happen after the treatment?

We will aim to gradually reduce the amount of steroid medication you are taking to the lowest safest dose. However, please note that this will depend on the type of tumour you have and what other treatments you may be having. We will discuss your individual treatment plan with you in more detail.

When should I seek medical help?

Contact your general practitioner (GP) or practice nurse immediately if you develop any symptoms of high blood glucose while receiving steroid therapy. We may need to review or amend your steroid dose or treatment plan.

Symptoms of high blood glucose include:

- feeling very thirsty and drinking lots of water
- passing urine (wee) more often or a new need to pass urine at night
- fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- blurred vision
- headaches
- confusion
- weight loss

My action plan

(To be completed by a healthcare professional)

Today's date:	
Name:	
Hospital number:	
Date of birth:	
Type of diabetes (please tick)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Type 1	
<input type="checkbox"/> Type 2	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other	
Diabetes care under (please tick)	
<input type="checkbox"/> GP or practice nurse	<input type="checkbox"/> Hospital diabetes doctor or specialist nurse
Name:	Name:
Telephone:	Telephone:
Current diabetes treatment (please tick)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Diet control only	
<input type="checkbox"/> Tablets	
<input type="checkbox"/> Insulin injections	
<input type="checkbox"/> Insulin pump	

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Current diabetes medicines (please list here):

Latest HbA1c result:

Date:

Dexamethasone (steroid) dose and guidance

If your blood glucose is **more than 20.1mmol/L**, contact the relevant healthcare professional below immediately for advice:

- During working hours - your GP
- Outside of working hours - NHS 111

'Your steroid medication and emergency card' factsheet provided (this can also be found in the 'Useful links' section below)

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about the information included in this factsheet, or about your treatment in general, please contact us.

Neuro-oncology nurse specialist team

Telephone: **023 8120 4071** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 4pm)

Outside of these hours, please call the neuro regional transfer unit on **023 8120 4843**.

Useful links

www.uhs.nhs.uk/departments/brain-spine-and-nerves/wessex-neurological-centre/neurosurgery/neuro-oncology

Your steroid medication and emergency card patient information factsheet

www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Medicinetherapiesandanaesthetics/Your-steroid-medication-and-emergency-card-3997-PIL.pdf

www.nhs.uk/medicines/steroids

www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/treatments-and-drugs/steroids

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