

Sick Day Rules ... if you have Adrenal Insufficiency

In adrenal insufficiency, the body is not making enough of the hormone **cortisol** and sometimes, making less of another hormone called **aldosterone**.

Cortisol is one of your body's important stress hormones. When someone is under stress (illness, injury, etc.), the body makes extra cortisol. This helps prepare them for emergency situations, also called the fight-or-flight response. Cortisol also plays a part in metabolism, fighting inflammation, regulating blood pressure etc.

If you need more cortisol because of adrenal insufficiency, you will take a medicine called **hydrocortisone** (sometimes other steroids like Prednisone or dexamethasone may be used)

Aldosterone is important in regulating the body's balance of salt and water. Not having enough aldosterone means your body won't have enough water and you will become dehydrated.

If you need more aldosterone, you will take a medicine called **fludrocortisone**.

Rules If You Take Replacement Glucocorticoid Medication (Hydrocortisone, Dexamethasone, or Prednisone) and Get Sick

Symptom	Action
Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your fever is 100.4°F or higher: double your dose. If your fever is 102°F or higher: triple your dose.
Vomiting and/or Diarrhea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mild to moderate: Take a double dose Severe symptoms: Take a triple dose
Vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wait 30 minutes and repeat the dose. If you vomit less than 1 hour after the dose, you need an injection of hydrocortisone/Solu-Cortef® or dexamethasone. After the injection, call your doctor to discuss or go to Urgent care/Emergency room. Do not delay the injection! Keep sipping small amounts of clear liquids that contain sugar.

Emergency Situations (severe illness/trauma, can't take your pills, significant blood loss)

- Use an emergency injection (usually intramuscularly). The emergency Solu-Cortef (hydrocortisone) dose is 100 mg. The emergency dexamethasone dose is 4 mg.
- Call 911 and go to the Emergency Room after getting the injection.

Helpful Tips

- Do NOT increase your dose or take extra pills when you have emotionally stressful days or a common cold, do regular exercise, or fly on a plane.
- If you live with someone, instruct them to call for medical help you if you:
 - become confused
 - are drowsy
 - have a change in behavior
 - become unresponsive
- Injections
 - Encourage family and/or friends to learn how to give you an emergency injection. If you are very sick, you may not be able to give yourself the injection.
 - Keep injectable hydrocortisone (Solu-Cortef) or dexamethasone on hand for emergencies. Check the expiration date frequently, and ask for new refill if the previous batch is expired.
 - Make sure that you have a needle and syringe on hand.
 - When traveling, take the injectable form of hydrocortisone or dexamethasone with you, along with a needle and syringe.
- Call your doctor if you have:
 - a fever for more than 3 days
 - a change in behavior, such as acting confused
 - vomiting and can't keep your medication down
 - persistent or severe diarrhea
 - signs of acute cortisol deficiency: headache, nausea, abdominal pain, dehydration, confusion, weakness, and/or fatigue

What Else Should I Know?

- Always carry medical identification (medic alert) like a bracelet or necklace to alert people during emergency that you have adrenal insufficiency and are taking medication (steroids).
- When you are sick, drink liquids that contain sugar and salt such as regular soda (not a diet one), 7 UP®, Gatorade®, or popsicles to help prevent dehydration.
- If you need surgery or extensive dental work, or if you have been in an accident, a larger dose of hydrocortisone will be needed. Tell the doctor or dentist that you have a cortisol deficiency. You will need a higher stress dose of steroids before a procedure or surgery.
- If you have questions, talk to a member of your health care team.