

If You Take Hydrocortisone

Self-care

This handout gives self-care instructions for patients who are taking hydrocortisone for adrenal problems.

Basic Self-care

- Buy a medical alert bracelet or necklace that says “Adrenal insufficiency.” **Wear it at all times.** If there is an emergency and you cannot talk, medical staff will know to check your medical alert jewelry. MedicAlert is one brand that many people wear.
- Always tell any doctor you see that you have adrenal problems and are taking hydrocortisone. It is very important to tell your surgeon about this before you have any type of procedure.
- If you run out of hydrocortisone, call 206.598.6190 and ask for the endocrinologist on call to be paged. Call as soon as you can, at any time of the day or night. Going without hydrocortisone is very dangerous, and can even cause death.



It is wise to wear medical alert jewelry that tells medical staff that you have adrenal insufficiency.

Warning Signs

Watch yourself for signs of adrenal insufficiency:

- Great fatigue (tiredness)
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Feeling lightheaded when you sit up or stand up suddenly

If you have any of these symptoms of adrenal problems:

- Call the clinic or hospital:
 - Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call the Neurosurgery Clinic at **206.598.5637**. We will guide you on how to increase your dose and for how long.
 - After hours and on holidays and weekends, call **206.598.6190** and ask for the endocrinologist on call to be paged.

When to Increase Your Dose

If you have a minor illness such as a cough, cold, or urinary tract infection (UTI), a minor procedure such as dental care, or severe emotional distress:

- **Double** your dose of hydrocortisone for 2 to 3 days. After that, resume your usual dose.
- If doubling your dose does not help you feel better, call your endocrinologist, visit an urgent care clinic, or go to the emergency room (ER).

If You Are Very Ill

If you are feeling very ill, are vomiting, or cannot keep down your hydrocortisone pills, give yourself a shot of Solu-Cortef and go to the closest emergency room (ER).

Solu-Cortef is a strong steroid medicine that contains hydrocortisone. It is given by an *intramuscular* shot (into your muscle). It can ease your symptoms while you get in touch with your endocrinologist or get to the ER.

If you do not yet know how to give yourself a shot of Solu-Cortef, please call our clinic soon at 206.598.5637 to schedule a clinic visit. Our nurse will teach you how to give yourself a shot of Solu-Cortef.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

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