

Endocrinology

Adrenal Insufficiency

IWK Endocrinology Dept., Halifax, N.S.

PL-0642

Last Update: April 2010Next Review: April 2013

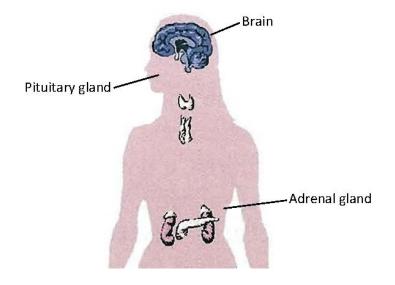
What is Cortisol Insufficiency?

Cortisol is a hormone made by the adrenal glands which are found on the top of the kidneys. Cortisol is needed by the body for energy and to keep the body's systems running smoothly. Extra Cortisol is made by the adrenal glands when the body needs to fight an illness or injury. When there is not enough Cortisol made by the body it must be replaced by taking a medication called hydrocortisone or

cortef. Hydrocortisone is a pill or liquid taken two to three times each day. A higher dose of hydrocortisone will be needed if your child has an illness, injury of needs sedation for surgery or dental work.



Daily Dose:



Stress Dose:

Solu-Cortef:

Dates stress dosing used:					

Mild/ Moderate Illness

Extra Cortisol is needed to help the body fight an illness or injury. This dose of hydrocortisone is referred to as the stress dose. Some situations in which you give a stress dose include:

- > a fever higher than 101 F OR 38 C
- > strep throat
- > ear infection
- > pneumonia / chest infection
- > vomiting
- > flu
- > a bad nose cold
- > a bad muscle sprain

A stress dose is not needed for routine immunizations, minor colds bumps or bruises.

Stress Dose

Give hydrocortisone or Cortef **as soon as** they become sick even if it is not the usual time for the next dose and every 8 hours, 3 times a day for 3 days. Try to spread the medicine out evenly throughout the day (ie. 8am, 3pm & 10pm). Try to give the medicine about 8am, 3pm and 10pm each day. If your child is still ill after 3 days and has not been seen by a doctor, your child should be seen by a doctor. You should also contact the Endocrine office call the Endocrine team to determine if the stress dose should be continued.

Severe Illness

If your child's body does not have enough Cortisol, his/her blood pressure and blood sugar may become too low. This is called an adrenal crisis. It requires an emergency treatment. Without treatment this can lead to unconsciousness, coma and even death.

Signs and Symptoms of Adrenal Crisis

- > weakness
- > extreme tiredness
- > vomiting
- diarrhea
- > cold-clammy skin
- > confusion
- > severe pains in the belly, legs or lower back
- > fast hear rate
- > fast breathing
- dizziness
- > pale skin
- > dark circles under eyes
- > dry mouth
- > less urine output

If adrenal crisis occurs, your child will look very sick. Extra Cortisol must be given by needle using a form of hydrocortisone called Solu-Cortef®. If you are not able to give this injection you must call for emergency help or take your child to the nearest emergency room.

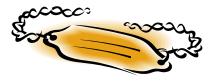
You will not harm your child by giving Solu-Cortef® even if the child does not need it.

After an injection always take you child to the nearest emergency room.

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Other Precautions

- Inform others looking after your child about when your child may need extra hydrocortisone or cortef, signs of an adrenal crisis and when to call for emergency help.
- Your child should wear a Medical Alert ID stating, "On Cortef®" or "Adrenal Insufficiency"



> Carry a copy of your dose sheet to show health care professionals in an emergency.



If you have any questions please call the Endocrinology Nursing Office at (902) 470-8127

In an Emergency call the IWK switchboard at (902) 470-8888 and ask to have the Endocrinologist on call paged.