



IWK Health Centre

Endocrinology

Adrenal

Insufficiency

IWK Endocrinology Dept., Halifax, N.S.

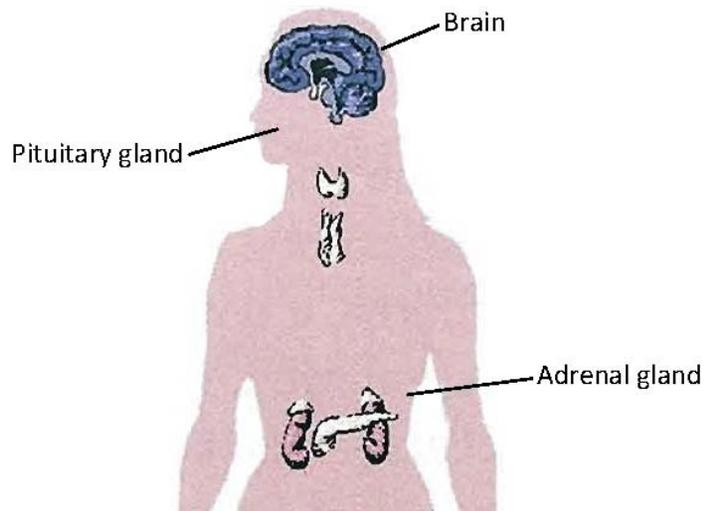
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Last Update: April 2010Next

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 or needs sedation for surgery or dental work.



Your Doses

Daily Dose:

Stress Dose:

Solu-Cortef:

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

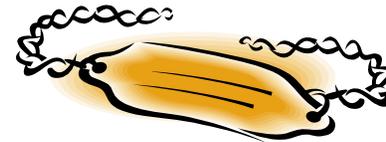
If adrenal crisis occurs, your child will look very sick. Extra Cortisol must be given by needle using a form of hydrocortisone called Solu-Cortef®. If you are not able to give this injection you must call for emergency help or take your child to the nearest emergency room.

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.

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.