

your usual diabetes care team to have a review of your diabetes.

What if I regularly take steroids?

- ◇ You may need to temporarily increase your diabetes treatment each time you take a steroid course. If your blood glucose levels are continually high, you need to contact your GP or diabetes specialist nurse to arrange a review of your diabetes treatment.

Contact Numbers

GP.....

Nurse

Diabetes Nurse.....

NHS Direct: 0845 4647

NHS Diabetes: www.diabetes.nhs.uk

Diabetes UK website: www.diabetes.org.uk

References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.



If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk



Information for people with diabetes taking steroids

Diabetes Care Department

www.ulh.nhs.uk

Aim of the leaflet

This leaflet is aimed at patients who are taking steroids who are known to be diabetic. It aims to tell you how steroids can affect your diabetes and how to manage your blood glucose levels.

What are steroids?

Steroids (Glucocorticosteroids) such as prednisolone or dexamethasone are a group of medicines that can be used in the treatment for many conditions e.g. asthma, inflammatory bowel conditions, arthritis and cancer.

How do steroids affect my diabetes control?

- ◇ Taking steroids can often cause a rise in blood glucose (sugar) levels. This can be expected to happen within a day or two after starting your steroids. You will find that it is more common for your highest blood glucose readings to be in the afternoon and evening with your blood glucose returning to near normal in the morning.
- ◇ High blood glucose levels may cause you to feel exceptionally thirsty and tired and you might find that you are passing an unusual amount of urine and your vision may become temporarily blurred.
- ◇ It is very important that you complete your course of steroids. If you have any immediate concerns then you need to speak to your doctor/consultant/diabetes nurse.

How to manage your blood glucose levels while on steroids

- ◇ You will need to monitor your blood glucose levels more frequently and your diabetes treatment may need to change. Steroids can raise your blood glucose levels to over 20 mmol/l, rising through the day. A temporary change in treatment aims to lower the levels to between 5 and 12 mmol/l.
- ◇ If you do not at present test your own blood glucose levels you need to speak to your doctor/practice nurse/diabetes

nurse to discuss whether it is appropriate for you to commence testing.

Diabetes treatment changes

What if I normally control my diabetes by a healthy diet?

- ◇ You may find that the doctor starts you on some tablets (Gliclazide) to help control your blood glucose while taking steroids. You will be able to stop these tablets 24 hours after your last dose of steroids.

What if I normally control my diabetes with tablets?

- ◇ Your doctor may advise you to increase your morning dose of tablets or you may need to start insulin temporarily. As your steroid dose comes down and is stopped, your diabetes tablets can be reduced to the dose you were taking before your steroids started. Insulin doses (if started) will also need to be reduced and usually stopped. Please ensure you have a contact number from your diabetes nurse/practice nurse for advice on this if you start insulin.

What if I normally control my diabetes with insulin?

- ◇ If you are taking insulin twice a day, you may need to increase your morning dose of insulin by 6 units or if you take quick acting insulin with meals you may need to increase your lunch and evening meal doses by up to 6 units. Contact your diabetes nurse/practice nurse for further advice about further increases if your blood glucose remains above 12 mmol/l. When your steroids are being reduced and stopped, you will need to reduce your insulin doses back to normal 24 hours after the steroids have been discontinued.

What do I do if my blood glucose levels do not return to normal?

- ◇ When your steroids are reduced or stopped your diabetes may become controlled again and your treatment can change back to what you were on before starting the steroids. However, if your blood glucose levels continue to remain high after 3-4 days it would be advisable to speak to