

# Dexamethasone

Medication Information Leaflet

## What is this medication for?

Dexamethasone belongs to a class of medications called corticosteroids. Corticosteroids can help to treat conditions involving inflammation (signs include warmth, redness, swelling and pain).

Dexamethasone can be used to:

- Reduce inflammation
- Relieve allergies
- Treat different diseases of the immune system
- Diagnose Cushing's Syndrome (a disorder where the body produces too much cortisol (steroid) hormone)

This medication can also be used for other conditions. Check with your doctor if you are unsure why you are taking this medication.

## How should I take/use this medication?

- Do not stop taking your medication without checking with your healthcare professional.
- This medication should be taken after food to prevent stomach upset.

## What should I do if I forget to take/use this medication?

If you forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. Then take your next dose at the usual time. Do not take two doses to make up for the missed dose.

## What precautions should I take?

Before starting on this medication, inform your doctor if you:

- Are allergic to this medication or any of the other ingredients of this medication
- Have plans to become pregnant, are pregnant or breastfeeding
- Have tuberculosis (a type of lung infection) or other infections
- Have stomach ulcer
- Have severe depression (feeling extremely sad, having low mood), moodswings or are unable to sleep
- Have epilepsy (fits)
- Have diabetes
- Have high blood pressure
- Have kidney, liver, thyroid or heart problems
- Have osteoporosis, a condition where you have thin or brittle bones
- Have any form of cancer
- Have glaucoma, a type of eye condition linked to increased pressure in the eye

If you come into contact with anyone who has an infectious disease such as chickenpox, shingles or measles, please see your doctor as soon as possible. Dexamethasone decreases your body's natural immune response and you may be at higher risk of getting these diseases.

Talk to your doctor before getting any vaccinations.

## What are some common side-effects of this medication?

Some possible side effects may include:

- Water retention (excess fluid build up in the body), increase in weight
- Being unable to sleep or feeling restless
- Stomach discomfort
- Wounds taking a longer time to heal or healing poorly

Inform your doctor if any side effect lasts for more than a few days, or the side effects become serious or bothersome.

## **What are some rare but serious side-effects that I need to seek medical advice immediately?**

The symptoms of a drug allergy include one or more of the following:

- Swollen face/eyes/lips/tongue
- Difficulty in breathing
- Itchy skin rashes over your whole body

Other rare but serious effects that may occur include:

- Signs of infection like fever, chills, sore throat, mouth sores or wound that will not heal
- Signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling tired, feeling thirsty more easily, feeling hungry more easily, passing urine more often, flushing or fast breathing
- Severe abdominal (stomach) pains or vomiting
- Bone pain or fractures
- Swelling, warmth, numbness, change of skin colour, or pain in a leg or arm
- Change in eyesight or vision
- Having a full or very round face
- Mood changes such as feeling depressed, anxious or frequently changing emotions
- Unusual bruising or bleeding, including black tarry or bloody stools or vomiting

If you experience any of these symptoms, you should stop your medication and see your healthcare professional immediately.

## **What food or medication should I avoid when I take this medication?**

Please inform your doctor if you are taking any of the following medications, before you start taking Dexamethasone:

- Aspirin
- Certain medications for pain such as Ibuprofen, Diclofenac, Naproxen
- Oral medications to treat fungal infection
- Medications to thin your blood such as Warfarin
- Oral hormone pills
- Medications used to reduce the activity of your body's immune system such as Cyclosporin or Tacrolimus

Inform your healthcare professional if you are taking or intend to take any other medications, supplements, traditional medications or herbal remedies.

## How should I store this medication?

Store in a cool and dry place, away from direct sunlight. Keep this medication away from children.

## How should I throw away this medication safely?

Pack this medication into a black trash bag and seal it tightly before throwing into the rubbish chute or bin.

### Disclaimers

If you take more than the recommended dose, please seek medical advice immediately. The information provided on this page does not replace information from your healthcare professional. Please consult your healthcare professional for more information.

*This article is jointly developed by members of the National Medication Information workgroup. The workgroup consists of cluster partners (National Healthcare Group, National University Health System and SingHealth), community pharmacies (Guardian, Unity and Watsons) and Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore.*

*Last updated on Nov 2019*