

# Hydrocortisone

Medication Information Leaflet

## What is this medication for?

Hydrocortisone belongs to a group of medication called steroids. It is used in adrenal insufficiency which is a condition where the body does not produce enough steroids.

Hydrocortisone can also be used to relieve swelling, redness, itch and allergic reactions.

It is often used for various conditions such as

- Asthma
- Severe allergies
- Skin problems
- Certain types of arthritis
- Certain diseases of the immune system such as Lupus

## How should I take/use this medication?

- Take the medication as prescribed by your doctor.
- Take this medication with food to prevent stomach upset.
- If you are taking a dose in the night, do not take it too late as it might keep you awake.
- You should still continue to take your medication regularly as told by your doctor even if you feel well. Stopping your medication suddenly without informing your doctors may cause your condition to become worse quickly.

## 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 have the following medical conditions:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Stomach ulcers
- Osteoporosis (weak and fragile bones)
- Glaucoma (increased pressure in the eye)
- Mood related conditions
- Any heart, liver or kidney problems
- Tuberculosis
- Epilepsy (seizure)
- You should let your doctor know if you are not feeling well or going for surgery as the medication dose may need to be changed.
- If you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant or are breastfeeding, you should inform your doctor.
- If you have been advised to receive vaccines, inform your healthcare provider that you are taking this medication. Some vaccines may not be suitable for use in patients who are taking hydrocortisone.
- If you have taken other steroids before, and had a bad reaction to it, such as having muscle weakness or experienced some mood changes.
- This medication may cause you to get infections more easily. Please inform your doctor if you have any infection before you start this medication. Avoid crowded places or being near people who are sick. Avoid close contact with people who have chicken pox, shingles or measles.

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

The common side effects include

- Upset stomach, nausea, vomiting
- Increased appetite, weight gain, fluid retention
- Increased sweating
- Feeling restless

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

Other rare but serious effects that may occur include:

- Mood changes like feeling depressed, anxious, fluctuating feelings
- Fast weight gain, especially on the face and upper back
- Significant fluid retention
- Very bad stomach pain
- Bruising more easily
- Muscle weakness or pain
- Change in eyesight or vision
- Bloody or black, tarry stools
- Signs of high blood sugar, such as confusion, lethargic, increased thirst, increased hunger, passing urine more often
- Signs of infection, such as fever, chills, sore throat, mouth sores or wound that will not heal

If you experience severe nausea or vomiting, or are unable to take the medication by mouth, see your healthcare professional immediately.

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

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

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?**

- Check with your doctor if you can drink alcohol when taking this medication, as this may increase your risk of gastrointestinal problems.
- Inform your doctor on the other medications which you are currently taking.

## **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. The content does not reflect drug availability and supply information in pharmacies and healthcare institutions. You are advised to check with the respective institutions for such information.*

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