

NEW! Adult NHS Emergency Steroid Card

Prescribing tip for information

Steroid Emergency Card (Adult) **NHS**

IMPORTANT MEDICAL INFORMATION FOR HEALTHCARE STAFF
THIS PATIENT IS PHYSICALLY DEPENDENT ON DAILY STEROID THERAPY as a critical medicine. It must be given/taken as prescribed and never omitted or discontinued. Missed doses, illness or surgery can cause adrenal crisis requiring emergency treatment.
Patients not on daily steroid therapy or with a history of steroid usage may also require emergency treatment.

Name.....
Date of Birth NHS Number

Why steroid prescribed

Emergency Contact

When calling 999 or 111, emphasise this is a likely adrenal insufficiency/Addison's/Addisonian crisis or emergency AND describe symptoms (vomiting, diarrhoea, dehydration, injury/shock).

Emergency treatment of adrenal crisis

- 1) EITHER 100mg Hydrocortisone i.v. or i.m. injection followed by 24 hr continuous i.v. infusion of 200mg Hydrocortisone in Glucose 5%
OR 50mg Hydrocortisone i.v. or i.m. qds (100mg if severely obese)
- 2) Rapid rehydration with Sodium Chloride 0.9%
- 3) Liaise with endocrinology team

Scan here for further information or search <https://www.endocrinology.org/adrenal-crisis>

The new Steroid Emergency Card is designed to support early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults and is detailed in the recent [National Patient Safety Alert \(NPSA\)](#) .

All patients with primary adrenal insufficiency, such as those with Addison's disease, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, and hypothalamo-pituitary damage are steroid dependent. Some patients who take oral, inhaled, or topical steroids for other medical conditions may develop secondary adrenal insufficiency and be steroid dependent.

Omission of steroids for patients with adrenal insufficiency can lead to adrenal crisis; a medical emergency which if left untreated can be fatal. Patients with adrenal insufficiency require higher doses of steroids if they become acutely ill or are subject to major body stressors, such as from trauma or surgery, to prevent an adrenal crisis.

Recently published national guidance promotes a new patient-held Steroid Emergency Card to be issued by prescribers. This helps healthcare staff to identify appropriate patients and gives information on the emergency treatment to start if they are acutely ill, or experience trauma, surgery, or other major stressors.

NPSA recommended actions to be completed as soon as possible and no later than 13 May 2021

1. All organisations that initiate steroid prescriptions should review their processes/ policies and their digital systems/software and prompts to ensure that prescribers issue a Steroid Emergency Card to all eligible patients, as outlined in new guidance.
2. Prescribers undertaking standard/scheduled reviews (eg in clinics or when authorising repeat prescriptions) should review their processes/policies and their digital systems/software and prompts to ensure all eligible patients prescribed steroids have been assessed, and where necessary issue a Steroid Emergency Card.
3. Providers that treat patients with acute physical illness or trauma, or who may require emergency or elective surgical or other invasive procedures, including day patients, should review their admission/assessment/examination/clerking documentation to ensure it includes prompts to check for risk of adrenal crisis and to establish if the patient has a Steroid Emergency Card.
4. Community and hospital pharmacies should ensure they can source and supply Steroid Emergency Cards, to replace those lost by patients or which become damaged.

It is hoped that the new emergency card and guidance will increase awareness of the need to start steroids promptly in patients at risk of an adrenal crisis, particularly those presenting in the emergency department or to acute medicine teams and those undergoing surgery or invasive procedures.

The Emergency Steroid Card can be ordered from the usual suppliers:

- a) NHS Forms at NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA) <http://www.nhsforms.co.uk/>
 - b) Primary Care Support England (PCSE online) <https://secure.pcse.england.nhs.uk/forms/pcsssignin.aspx>
- Alternatively a [PDF copy](#) can be downloaded here.

More information is available in the Royal College of Physicians article [Guidance for the prevention and emergency management of adult patients with adrenal insufficiency](#)

To contact the Medicines Optimisation Team please phone 01772 214302