

ADRENAL INSUFFICIENCY: INSTRUCTIONS FOR SICK DAYS OR PROCEDURES

Normally functioning glands produce more glucocorticoid hormone (cortisol) when the body is under the physical stress of fever (over 100 degrees Fahrenheit), infection, surgery, vomiting, or diarrhea. In these situations, it is important to drink plenty of sugar and salt containing fluids to prevent dehydration or low blood sugar.

The fact that you have adrenal insufficiency means that your body cannot deal with these stresses by making more cortisol. Just as you must replace your basic cortisol needs with your regular replacement dose (hydrocortisone), you must also replace your increased needs with extra doses of hydrocortisone.

If you are sick with a fever (over 100 degrees Fahrenheit), infection, vomiting, or diarrhea you must **triple** your hydrocortisone and you should call your local doctor right away. If you are undergoing a planned medical procedure (such as minor surgery, gastroscopy, colonoscopy, bronchoscopy etc.) or major dental procedure (tooth extraction, root canal), you should **double** your hydrocortisone dose the day before, the day of and the day after the procedure.

For these reasons, you should **ALWAYS wear a med Alert bracelet** or necklace that states that you have adrenal insufficiency, and you should tell about your condition to all medical providers.

What if I am so ill that I cannot take my medication

If you are too ill to take your pills, or you cannot keep them down (i.e. vomiting), you must take a **glucocorticoid (ex: hydrocortisone) by injection**. For this you should urgently go to the nearest hospital emergency room (or carry an injectable vial if you are going to be far from a medical facility, such as during a camping trip, boat trip or travel to remote areas).

How much medicine should I take once I feel better?

As soon as your illness is over and the symptoms are gone (for example, fever, vomiting, diarrhea), you can usually return to taking your usual amount of medication.