Advice for patients taking long-term prednisolone for rheumatological conditions.

If you have been taking 5mg or more of prednisolone for 4 weeks or more, you might have adrenal insufficiency, and your body might not be able to make enough of its own steroids.

Prednisolone is very similar to one of your body’s own steroid hormones, cortisol. When under a major stress, for example a serious infection, your body needs to make an extra “boost” of cortisol. In adrenal insufficiency, your body cannot make this extra “boost”. During normal life this does not cause a problem, but if your body does happen to come under major stress, you need to know in advance what you should do.

*If you are on prednisolone 5mg or more, and you become unwell, DO NOT STOP YOUR STEROIDS!*

Be aware of these two “sick day” rules:

**Rule 1.** If you are ill or have fever, which is bad enough that you stay in bed or need antibiotics, follow Sick Day Rule 1: Increase your usual steroid dose for the time that you are unwell

- If you usually take less than 10mg prednisolone daily, take double your usual dose while you are not well.
- If you usually take between 10mg and 19mg prednisolone, increase to the full “stress dose” of 20mg.
- If you usually take 20mg or more, stay on your usual dose (no need to increase).

**Rule 2.** If you have severe diarrhoea or vomiting that lasts more than a day, or if you need to take “bowel prep” before a colonoscopy, or if you have a major injury or are having an operation, follow Sick Day Rule 2: You may need an injection of steroid that same day. Please seek medical advice urgently if you can’t do this.

What to do now:

- Contact your hospital team now if you have any questions.
- Please make sure you have enough spare steroid tablets that you could follow Sick Day Rule 1 if you get ill.
- Keep these instructions to show your doctor or healthcare team.
- Please carry an up to date steroid emergency card, which can be found online [https://www.endocrinology.org/media/3563/new-nhs-emergency-steroid-card.pdf](https://www.endocrinology.org/media/3563/new-nhs-emergency-steroid-card.pdf)