

COVID-19 and patients receiving hormone therapies

Information for families of children and adolescents receiving hydrocortisone or prednisolone

In the current global situation concerning coronavirus COVID-19, we understand many families have questions about the risk to children receiving hydrocortisone or prednisolone therapy. Information from overseas indicates that the risk of severe disease in children as a consequence of COVID-19 is minimal. There have been no reported cases of children under 10 years of age becoming significantly unwell. There have been extremely few cases (less than 1%) of adolescents and teenagers becoming significantly unwell. The people most at risk of getting the virus are those who have recently travelled overseas, or been in contact with someone who has the illness. The people most at risk of significant illness are the elderly with chronic disease.

Children receiving hydrocortisone or prednisolone at physiologic replacement levels (i.e. where their treatment is replacing a hormone that their body is unable to produce itself) are not significantly immunocompromised. They are therefore not more prone to catching various infections than other children. It is anticipated though that COVID-19 will eventually infect many people. If this occurs your child may have minimal symptoms or develop a flu-like illness. If the latter occurs standard sick day management principles apply such as fluids and temperature relief with paracetamol with increased doses of either hydrocortisone or prednisolone (https://www.rch.org.au/kidsinfo/fact_sheets/Adrenal_crisis_prevention/). Please also ensure that your child's management plan is up to date (<https://www.rch.org.au/endo/Conditions/adrenal-disorders/>). In the unlikely event that your child becomes significantly unwell with breathing difficulties we would, as always, recommend seeking medical attention. Otherwise standard precautions to prevent spread of any respiratory illness are recommended. This includes taking extra care with frequent hand washing with soap and water or an alcohol based hand rub, covering coughs and sneezes and avoiding contact with anyone with flu like symptoms. Immunization for seasonal influenza is strongly recommended.

There are reports of some supply shortage for hydrocortisone (4mg and 20 mg tablets) <http://apps.tga.gov.au/Prod/msi/Search/Details/hydrocortisone>. It is anticipated that these issues may last until May. We are not aware of any supply issues with prednisolone. The RCH Pharmacy has good stocks of hydrocortisone tablets. If your local pharmacy is having difficulty obtaining supply, please contact the RCH Pharmacy directly (9345 5492). In the unlikely event that hydrocortisone cannot be obtained your treating doctor may elect to use prednisolone as an alternative. This treatment is not inferior to hydrocortisone. Please discuss any questions with your treating doctor. *Please also ensure that when you attend your clinic appointment you ensure that you receive enough scripts to last at least 6 months.*

Currently the advice from the Victorian Department of Health is that schools should remain open. The Premier though has indicated that at some point in the future schools might close and that there will be no penalty if parents decide not to send their child to school before that time. There is no evidence though that parents of children receiving hydrocortisone or prednisolone at physiologic replacement doses should consider things differently from their other families. The choice whether to send your child to school or not is an individual one.

We recognise that families and children may be feeling stressed and anxious. We also recognise that the situation is changing rapidly and that recommendations are also changing. We will endeavour to

deal with all queries as efficiently as we can and in a respectful manner. As always we also expect that families will interact with our staff in a respectful manner <https://www.rch.org.au/your-rights/>.

The situation regarding COVID-19 is evolving and changing rapidly, so our understanding of the risks in relation to children may change. Please keep up to date by accessing the Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services website at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

If you are planning to travel, please follow the travel health advice from the Australian Government at <https://www.smarttraveller.gov.au/>

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