

# Information for parents about prednisolone for the treatment of Infantile Spasms (West syndrome)



Infantile spasms (West syndrome) is a serious condition which can harm your child's development. High dose prednisolone is effective for controlling the spasms and improving development. Common and mild side effects of prednisolone include appetite stimulation, weight gain, irritability, sleep disturbance and an upset stomach. Uncommon but serious side effects include increased risk of serious infection, high blood pressure, high blood sugar and decreased stress response. Your child will be taking prednisolone for only a short period of time and these side effects are temporary.

## Serious infections and fever

When your child is taking prednisolone, there is increased risk of serious infections.

Your child might be sicker than they look, because steroids can mask the signs of illness. If your child becomes unwell or has a fever above 38°C please contact the hospital and go to the nearest Emergency Department. When you get there, show the Medical Alert advice card to the nurse AND to the doctor who sees you child.

If your child is exposed to chicken pox (or shingles), contact your doctor immediately as your child may require treatment to prevent infection.

## Blood pressure

Your child's blood pressure will be checked at the neurology outpatient clinic, by your child's paediatrician, or by Hospital in the Home. Most children do not require treatment for high blood pressure.

## Blood sugar

It is important to tell your doctor if your child seems very thirsty or is passing more urine than normal, which could indicate that the blood sugar level is high. Most children do not require treatment for high blood sugar.

## Immunisations

Your child should not receive any live vaccines (eg. MMR, varicella) while taking prednisolone. It is safe for your child to receive non-live vaccines, but they may not provide the expected immunity because the immune response is suppressed.

To make sure all vaccines given are safe and work properly, it is recommended that all immunisations are delayed until at least one month after prednisolone treatment has been completed.

## Stress response

Prednisolone is related to the body's natural stress hormones which help us when we are sick. When your child is taking prednisolone, the normal stress hormone response to illness is suppressed. It is important that your child does not miss any doses of prednisolone while on treatment (eg. by forgetting doses or vomiting), and if they become sick during or following treatment, contact your doctor immediately. Sometimes extra doses of steroid hormones are needed if your child becomes sick or needs an anaesthetic.

## Contact details of your doctor

If you have any concerns or queries about your child or your child's treatment, please contact your doctor:

Name: .....

Contact number: .....

If you are unable to contact your child's doctor, please contact RCH on 9345 5522 and ask to speak to a doctor, or bring your child to the nearest Emergency Department.