

If you need any further assistance or advice, please contact:

Macmillan Radiographer **01803 654273**
Your Clinical Nurse Specialist
Your Oncologist via their secretary

Cancer Support and Information Centre **01803 617521**

For further information there are booklets available **FREE OF CHARGE** from

Macmillan Cancer Support **Free phone 0808 808 00 00**

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) Office - Hengrave
House 01803 655838

Mon-Fri 10am-4pm pals.sdhc@nhs.net

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

PATIENT INFORMATION

Steroid Use in Cancer

Radiotherapy information for
Torbay Hospital patients

Steroid Use in Cancer

There are a number of reasons why steroids are prescribed for cancer. You might have them:

- To reduce inflammation
- To help boost your appetite
- To treat the cancer itself, often alongside chemotherapy treatment
- To help relieve sickness when having chemotherapy

Most people who have steroids as part of cancer treatment only need to take them for a few days or weeks (short term).

The steroid commonly used in cancer treatment is Dexamethasone, but the following may also be given:

- Prednisolone
- Methylprednisolone

The dose and length of time you need to take the steroids for depends on why you are having them. You may need to take them every other day, once a day or several times a day.

If you miss a dose of steroids, don't take a double dose. Let your health care professional know and ask them what you should do.

If you are taking steroids for more than 3 weeks, you should have a blue steroid card to carry with you all the time; or you may wear a medical alert bracelet. This is just in case you need treatment in an emergency, so the health care professionals will know you are taking steroids. (You should also tell your dentist you are having steroids if you need any dental work done).

Stopping steroid treatment

You should only stop taking steroids if your health care professional tells you to. If you take steroids for more than a few days, your body will produce less natural steroids. So when you stop taking the steroids, your body has to readjust. The dose must be gradually reduced, rather than stopping them suddenly.

1. Steroids may be stopped immediately if you have been taking less than 4mg dexamethasone for less than 3 weeks.
2. If taking over 4mg, your health care professional will give you a plan of how to reduce

If symptoms recur, you should return to the previous dose that kept symptoms under control.