

When to issue a Steroid Emergency Card

In 2020 NHS Improvement published a National Patient Safety Alert to launch a Steroid Emergency Card to support early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults. This was in response to a number of incidents where patients had not received their usual steroid medication on admission to hospital and/or had not received appropriate additional steroid therapy for acute illness. All patients on the long term steroids, listed below, should be given a Steroid Emergency Card which they should carry with them and show to the medical team on admission to hospital. Other steroid preparations, when used at licensed doses, do not meet the requirement to issue a steroid emergency card. This guidance has been compiled based on the references below, in conjunction with local clinical leads, to provide practical guidance on when to issue a steroid emergency card.

All adults on doses of steroids, equivalent to or greater than the values shown below, for 4 weeks or longer, must be given a Steroid Emergency Card.

Oral steroids	Long term steroids ≥ 4 weeks	Repeated short courses (> 3 per year) or one short course if the patient has been on long term steroids within the past year
Beclometasone dipropionate	625 micrograms daily	5mg daily
Betamethasone	750 micrograms daily	6mg daily
Budesonide	1.5mg daily	12mg daily
Deflazacort	6mg daily	48mg daily
Dexamethasone	500 micrograms daily	4mg daily
Hydrocortisone	15mg daily	120mg daily
Methylprednisolone	4mg daily	32mg daily
Prednisolone	5mg daily	40mg daily
Prednisone	5mg daily	40mg daily

Inhalers and Nebules	
Beclometasone dipropionate Inhalers	
Dry powder inhaler, Aerosol inhaler Brand: Easyhaler, Clenil Modulite, Soprobe	>1000 micrograms daily
Extra fine particle products Brand: Qvar, Qvar Autohaler, Qvar Easi-Breathe, Fostair, Kelhale	>500 micrograms daily
Budesonide Inhalers and Nebules	
Inhaler Nebules Brand: Easyhaler, Budelin Novolizer, Fobumix, DuoResp, Spiromax, Pulmicort, Symbicort, Pulmicort Respules	>1000 micrograms daily
Ciclesonide Inhalers	
Brand: Alvesco	>480 micrograms daily
Fluticasone propionate Inhalers and Nebules	
Aerosol inhaler, Dry power inhaler, Nebules Brand: AirFluSal, Aloflute, Combisal, Flixotide, Flutiform, Flutiform K, Sereflo, Seretide Evohaler, Sirdupla, AirFluSal, Forspiro, Flixotide Accuhaler, Fusacomb Easyhaler, Seretide Accuhaler, Stalpex	>500 micrograms daily
Fluticasone furoate Inhalers	
Dry powder inhaler Brand: Relvar Ellipta, Trelegy Ellipta	>100 micrograms daily
Mometasone furoate Inhalers	
Brand: Asmanex	>400 micrograms daily
Any patients on any steroid inhaler AND a steroid nasal spray must receive a steroid emergency card	

Nasal sprays	
Fluticasone furoate Brand: Avamys	>100 micrograms daily (4 sprays per day)
Any patients on any steroid inhaler AND a steroid nasal spray must receive a steroid emergency card	

Rectal Preparations	
Prednisolone 20mg/application foam enema	One metered dose daily
Prednisolone 5mg suppositories	One suppository daily
Prednisolone 20mg/100ml enema	One enema daily

IntraArticular Hydrocortisone, Methylprednisolone, Triamcinolone
A single injection is unlikely to cause permanent adrenal suppression but if a patient has major surgery, trauma or intercurrent illness within 28 days they may be at risk of adrenal insufficiency. If a patient receives repeated injections, or if they are also taking other steroid therapy, they should be considered at risk. Steroid emergency cards should be given to all patients receiving Intra Articular steroids. Those having a single dose, and not on other steroids can be advised to discard them after one month

Eye/ear/nasal drop and sprays	
Fluticasone proprionate nasal drops: Flixonase Nasule	>500 micrograms daily
Prednisolone sodium phosphate 0.5% ear/eye drops	≥ 20 drops daily
Prednisolone acetate eye drops 1%	≥ 10 drops daily

Skin Preparations	
Very potent steroids	
Clobetasol preparations Brand: ClobaDerm, Dermovate, Etrivex	>50g per week or ≥ 200g per month 30-60g per month if long term and/or occlusion
Diflucortolone valerate 0.3% Brand: Nerisone Forte	
Potent steroids	
Beclometasone	>75g per week or > 300g per month >60-120g per month if long term and/or occlusion
Betamethasone Brand: Audavate, Betnovate, Diprosone, Diprosalic, Dovobet	
Fucibet	
Diflucortolone valerate 0.1% Brand: Nerisone	
Fluocinonide Brand: Metosyn, Metosyn FAPG	
Fluocinolone Brand: Synalar, Synalar C	
Fluticasone propionate Brand: Cutivate	
Hydrocortisone butyrate Brand: Locoid	
Mometasone furoate Brand: Elocon	

- References**
- NHSI. Steroid emergency card to support early recognition and treatment of adrenal crisis in adults Aug 2020
 - Specialist Pharmacy service. Exogenous steroids, adrenal insufficiency and adrenal crisis – who is at risk and how should they be managed. March 2021
 - PrescQIPP. Implementing the Steroid Emergency Card National Patient Safety Alert. April 2021