PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Hydrocortisone (Systemic

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: US

Alkindi Sprinkle; Cortef; Solu-CORTEF

Brand Names: Canada

AURO-Hydrocortisone; Cortef; Solu-CORTEF

What is this drug used for?

- It is used for many health problems like allergy signs, asthma, adrenal gland problems, blood problems, skin rashes, or swelling problems. This is not a list of all health problems that this drug may be used for. Talk with the doctor.

Granules:

- This form of this drug is not approved for use in adults. However, your doctor may decide the benefits

of taking this drug outweigh the risks. If you have been given this form of this drug, ask your doctor for information about the benefits and risks. Talk with your doctor if you have questions about taking this drug.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

All products:

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have any of these health problems: A fungal infection or malaria infection in the brain.
- If you have a herpes infection of the eye.
- If you have nerve problems in the eye.

Injection (if given in the muscle):

- If you have low platelet levels.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is

safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- You may have more of a chance of getting an infection. Some infections have been severe or deadly. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Call your doctor right away if you have any signs of infection like fever, chills, flu-like signs, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or a wound that will not heal.
- Chickenpox and measles can be very bad or even deadly in some people taking steroid drugs like this drug. Avoid being near anyone with chickenpox or measles if you have not had these health problems before. If you have been exposed to chickenpox or measles, talk with your doctor.

- Long-term use may raise the chance of cataracts or glaucoma. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug may cause weak bones (osteoporosis) with long-term use. Talk with your doctor to see if you have a higher chance of weak bones or if you have any questions.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), you will need to watch your blood sugar closely. Tell your doctor if you get signs of high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- If you drink grapefruit juice or eat grapefruit often, talk with your doctor.
- If you have or may have a condition called pheochromocytoma, talk with your doctor. Very bad and sometimes deadly effects have been seen in patients with this condition who use this type of drug.
- Call your doctor right away if you have signs of a weak adrenal gland like severe upset stomach or throwing up, severe dizziness or passing out, muscle weakness, feeling very tired, mood changes, decreased appetite, or weight loss.

- Patients with cancer may be at greater risk of getting a bad and sometimes deadly health problem called tumor lysis syndrome (TLS). Talk with the doctor.
- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.
- If the patient is a baby who was born premature, talk with the doctor. A certain heart problem has happened in these children after getting this drug.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.
- If you used this drug when you were pregnant, tell your baby's doctor.

Injection:

- Very bad health problems have happened when drugs like this one have been given into the spine (epidural). These include paralysis, loss of eyesight, stroke, and sometimes death. It is not known if drugs like this one are safe and effective when given into the spine. These drugs are not approved for this use. Talk with the doctor.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

For all uses of this drug:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of low potassium levels like muscle pain or weakness, muscle cramps, or a heartbeat that does not feel normal.
- Signs of a pancreas problem (pancreatitis) like very bad stomach pain, very bad back pain, or very bad upset stomach or throwing up.
- Signs of high blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.

- Signs of Cushing’s disease like weight gain in the upper back or belly, moon face, very bad headache, or slow healing.
- Shortness of breath, a big weight gain, or swelling in the arms or legs.
- Skin changes (pimples, stretch marks, slow healing, hair growth).
- Bone or joint pain.
- Period (menstrual) changes.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- Change in the way you act.
- Depression or other mood changes.
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there).
- Seizures.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Severe stomach pain.
- Black, tarry, or bloody stools.
- Throwing up blood or throw up that looks like coffee grounds.

For poor adrenal function:

- Stopping this drug, taking too low of a dose, or switching between dose forms of this drug can lead to severe and life-threatening adrenal gland problems or death. Call your doctor right away if you have a decreased appetite, upset stomach, throwing up, or joint pain. Call your doctor right away if you have signs of low blood sugar or dehydration like dizziness; headache; feeling sleepy or weak; shaking; fast heartbeat; confusion; increased thirst or hunger; sweating; dry skin, mouth, or eyes; or fast breathing.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Upset stomach or throwing up.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Restlessness.
- Sweating a lot.
- Increased appetite.
- Weight gain.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

Tablets:

- Take tablet with food.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Injection:

- It is given as a shot into a muscle or vein.

All products:

- If you have been taking this drug for many weeks, talk with your doctor before stopping. You may want to

slowly stop this drug.

- Tell your doctor if you have missed a dose or recently stopped this drug and you feel very tired, weak, or shaky, or have a fast heartbeat, confusion, sweating, or dizziness.
- This drug may lower how much natural steroid is in your body. If you have a fever, an infection, surgery, or you are hurt, talk with your doctor. You may need extra doses of oral steroids. These extra steroids will help your body deal with these stresses. Carry a warning card saying that there may be times when you need extra steroids.
- Have your blood work checked as you have been told by your doctor. You may also need to have your eye pressure and bone density checked if you take this drug for a long time.
- This drug may affect allergy skin tests. Be sure your doctor and lab workers know you take this drug.
- You may need to lower how much salt is in your diet and take extra potassium. Talk with your doctor.
- Talk with your doctor before getting any vaccines. Use of some vaccines with this drug may either raise the chance of an infection or make the vaccine not work as well.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

Tablets:

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

Injection:

- Call your doctor to find out what to do.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

Tablets:

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.

Injection:

- If you need to store this drug at home, talk with your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist about how to store it.

All products:

- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have

questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It

is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2024-01-22

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Hydrocortisone (Systemic - Last updated on December 12, 2022
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