

ADRENAL INSUFFICIENCY PATIENT RESOURCE

ADRENAL HORMONES

Adrenal Insufficiency (AI) is a condition where the body is unable to produce enough adrenal hormones which are essential to life.

Adrenal hormones are called “stress hormones” because they allow the body to respond to stress.

-  **Cortisol (a glucocorticoid hormone)**
Regulates blood pressure, wound healing, and blood sugar
-  **Aldosterone (a mineralocorticoid hormone)**
Regulates blood pressure, and water and salt balance

When the body is unable to make adrenal hormones, especially cortisol, the body may develop the following symptoms to the list of **Common Symptoms**. Primary AI occurs when the adrenal glands are directly affected, resulting in a lack of both cortisol and aldosterone. Secondary AI occurs where the adrenal glands are indirectly affected, resulting in a deficiency of only cortisol.

COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Fainting or dizziness on standing
- Low blood pressure
- Severe nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea
- Salt craving
- Weight loss
- Darkening of skin
- Back or abdomen pain

SUGGESTIONS

-  Wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace with the term “ADRENAL INSUFFICIENT- STEROID DEPENDENT”.
-  Keep a wallet card, and/or a have letter from your doctor outlining the need for emergency medications and dosing recommendations

HOW AI IS TREATED?

- Cortisol Replacement** → hydrocortisone (Cortef™), cortisone acetate, dexamethasone, or prednisone.
- Aldosterone Replacement** → fludrocortisone (Florinef™)

TALK TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER IF...

-  Dizzy when getting out of bed or changing position
-  Worsening energy
-  Unwanted weight loss or weight gain
-  Blood sugars too high or too low
-  Blood pressure too high (> 140/90 mmHg) or too low (< 90/60 mmHg)
-  Worsening salt craving

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

During illness, surgery, physical injury, or emotional stress, your body requires additional cortisol doses and in some circumstances this can be life threatening if not treated (Adrenal Crisis).

See your personal treatment plan regarding stress dosing and adrenal crisis management.

-  Ask your doctor about the need for an emergency glucocorticoid injection kit at home, which may be recommended in cases of significant illness or travel. Keep in mind, you still need to go to the hospital if you have adrenal crisis symptoms.
-  Ensure that friends/family can recognize the signs and symptoms of adrenal crisis and when to get help.

RESOURCES

- Hormone Health Network: <http://www.hormone.org/diseases-and-conditions/adrenal-insufficiency>
- Patient.info: <https://patient.info/signs-symptoms/tiredness-fatigue/addisons-disease>
- National Adrenal Disease Foundation: <https://www.nadf.us/adrenal-diseases/addisons-disease/>
- AHS Health Link (available 24/7): Call 811 or visit <https://myhealth.alberta.ca>
- MyHealth Alberta: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/>
- Injection kit video demos: <https://www.addisonsdisease.org.uk/the-emergency-injection-for-the-treatment-of-adrenal-crisis>

NOTES
