

## **DEXAMETHASONE** for chemotherapy premedication

Other names: Dexamethasone Douglas®



**Important note:** The following information is intended to add to, not replace, the knowledge and judgment of your doctor, pharmacist or other health care professional.

### **Why you are taking this medication**

Dexamethasone (dex-a-METH-a-son) is a medicine that is used to prevent or reduce nausea and vomiting caused by cancer chemotherapy. It is also used to prevent allergic reactions caused by some chemotherapy medicines. It can be given by injection or taken by mouth.

It is important to take dexamethasone exactly as directed by your doctor. You may be given tablets of more than one strength to make the right dose. Make sure you understand the directions. It is better to take the dexamethasone with food and a glass of water or milk.

### **Dexamethasone used to prevent nausea**

- Dexamethasone is usually taken about 30 minutes before receiving chemotherapy. It may be continued after chemotherapy for a certain period of time. The exact dose and how often you take it will be determined by your doctor.
- It is important to take dexamethasone exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions.

### **Dexamethasone used to prevent allergic reactions**

- Dexamethasone is taken before specific chemotherapy medicines known to have a higher risk of causing allergic reactions. The exact dose and how often you take it will be determined by your doctor.
- It is important to take dexamethasone exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions.

If you miss a dose or vomit within one hour of taking dexamethasone, take it as soon as you can. Call your doctor (during office hours) to ask about when to take your next dose.

Store dexamethasone tablets out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.

Tell other doctors or dentists that you are being treated with dexamethasone before you receive any treatment from them.

### **Other medication**

Other drugs may interact with dexamethasone. Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking other medicine including herbal or complementary products and medicines you can buy without a prescription.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new medicines.

Alcohol may increase the risk of some side effects of dexamethasone. Avoid drinking alcohol while being treated with dexamethasone.

**Side effects**

Unfortunately as well as having good effects, most medicines have some effects on your body that are unwanted. These are called *side effects*.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
<p><b>Heartburn and indigestion</b> may occur. There may be an increased risk of stomach problems such as bleeding ulcers especially if you have had stomach problems before.</p>	<p>To help with heartburn or indigestion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your dexamethasone with food.</li> <li>• Take antacids one hour before <i>or</i> two hours after dexamethasone. <u>Note</u>: do not take antacids within one hour before <i>or</i> two hours after dexamethasone. Antacids can reduce the effectiveness of dexamethasone when taken at the same time.</li> </ul> <p>Some medicines such as aspirin or ibuprofen may increase your risk of bleeding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by a doctor.</li> <li>• For minor pain, try paracetamol first.</li> </ul>
<p>You may have <b>mood changes</b>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See your doctor as soon as possible during office hours. Your doctor may change the dose of dexamethasone.</li> </ul>
<p>You may have <b>difficulty in falling asleep</b> on the days you take dexamethasone.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk to your doctor if trouble sleeping continues to bother you.</li> <li>• This will return to normal when you stop taking dexamethasone.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sugar control</b> may be affected in diabetics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check your blood or urine sugar regularly if you usually use test strips.</li> </ul>

**See your doctor as soon as possible (during office hours) if you have:**

- Mood changes.
- Uncontrolled nausea or vomiting.

**Read this leaflet and discuss any questions you have about your medicines with your doctor or pharmacist**