Coronavirus Vulnerable Adult Advice – dated: 21st January 2021

This resource has been created to address uncertainty and provide guidance and support at this challenging time.

People who take steroids for endocrine conditions are not at significant increased risk of contracting coronavirus but may become more unwell if they develop coronavirus. Whilst there is some research suggesting patients with Addison's Disease have a small increased risk of infections, this is not to the same degree as patients who are immunocompromised and hence patients with Addison's Disease do not fall into the clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) group, unless you have a diagnosis of Autoimmune polyendocrine syndrome type 1 (APS-1)/ Autoimmune polyendocrinopathy-candidiasis-ectodermal dystrophy (APECED) syndrome.

Patients with Addison's Disease and other causes of adrenal insufficiency, such as congenital adrenal hyperplasia or secondary adrenal insufficiency due to a pituitary tumour, fall into the vulnerable group. The government has issued guidance that patients with these conditions should be particularly stringent in following social distancing measures and advise people to work from home, where possible.

Priority Groups for coronavirus vaccines

The government has issued a list of people considered vulnerable - you can find more guidance about who should get a vaccine, and when from the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisations (JCVI). Whilst adrenal insufficiency is not specifically mentioned in this guidance, the following criteria apply to people with adrenal insufficiency:

Category 6: "People aged 16 to 64 years with underlying health conditions which put them at higher risk of serious illness or death from coronavirus."

This group includes people with all types of Addison's disease and other causes of adrenal insufficiency. The individual may be in a higher category due to further health circumstances and any treatments they take. This decision will be based on the health care professional responsible for their care and category 6 should be taken as a minimum requirement.

Category 4: "Everyone 70 years old and above, and clinically extremely vulnerable individuals"

This group includes people with Autoimmune polyendocrine syndrome type 1 (APS-1) / Autoimmune polyendocrinopathy-candidiasis-ectodermal dystrophy (APECED) syndrome, a rare variant of autoimmune Addison's disease.

Of course, you may be prioritised in a higher category for vaccination for other reasons, including because of your age, or another underlying health problem which makes you more vulnerable than the adrenal insufficiency/ steroid-dependence alone.

Hydrocortisone medication & hydrocortisone emergency injection kit

As you will be aware it is important for people with adrenal insufficiency to increase their steroids if unwell as per the usual sick day rules. Please ensure that you have sufficient supplies to cover increased doses if you become unwell with coronavirus and an up-to-date emergency injection of hydrocortisone 100mg.

- Latest coronavirus dosing requirements can be read on the Society for Endocrinology (SfE) website.
- Print out injection instruction leaflets are available on the ADSHG charity website along with training videos demonstrated by an endocrine specialist nurse.

Please note that if you feel well, patients with adrenal insufficiency do not need to routinely increase their hydrocortisone dose on the day of the COVID-19 vaccination. Serious side effects are rare and additional hydrocortisone should only be given if you feel significantly unwell and/or develops fever after the vaccination. Mild side effects such as 'flu-like aches and headache are commoner. If you develop a temperature, chills or 'flu-like aches remember to take paracetamol in the first instance and keep well hydrated.

This is a rapidly changing situation and information will be updated by the government here. The ADSHG charity website has a specific vaccine topic providing support and information, which will be updated as the situation develops.

Thank you for your consideration.

On behalf of the Addison's Disease Self-Help Group (ADSHG)

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