



Provincial Health Services Authority

**For the Patient: Dexamethasone (for premedication)**Other names: DECADRON®, HEXADROL®,  
DEXASONE®

*(Note: There is another dexamethasone handout for cancer treatment)*

- Dexamethasone is a drug 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 drugs. It can be given by injection or taken by mouth. The tablet may contain lactose.
- 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 dexamethasone tablets 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 every 12 hours 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 drugs including docetaxel (TAXOTERE®) and paclitaxel (TAXOL®). 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 1 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.
- Other drugs such as carbamazepine (TEGRETOL®), phenytoin (DILANTIN®) and primidone (MYSOLINE®) may **interact** with dexamethasone. Tell your doctor if you are taking these or any other drugs as your dose may need to be changed. Check with your doctor or pharmacist before you start taking any new drugs.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of dexamethasone.

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

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	MANAGEMENT
<p><b>Heartburn</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 heartburn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take your dexamethasone with food.</li> <li>• Discuss with your doctor which antacids to take to relieve heartburn (<u>Note</u>: do not take antacids within one hour before or two hours after dexamethasone). Antacids can reduce the amount of dexamethasone absorbed when taken at the same time.</li> </ul> <p>Some medications such as ASA (e.g., ASPIRIN®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL®) may increase your risk of stomach problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not stop taking any medication that has been prescribed by your doctor (e.g., <b>ASA for your heart</b>).</li> <li>• For minor pain, try acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) first, but occasional use of ibuprofen may be acceptable.</li> </ul>
<p>You may have <b>mood changes</b>.</p>	<p>See your doctor as soon as possible during office hours. Your doctor may change the dose of dexamethasone.</p>
<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 your trouble in 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 diabetic patients.</p>	<p>Check your blood sugar regularly if you are diabetic.</p>

**SEE YOUR DOCTOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE (DURING OFFICE HOURS) IF YOU HAVE:**

- **Mood changes**

**CHECK WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONTINUE OR BOTHER YOU:**

- Uncontrolled nausea or vomiting

