

Do you want to know?

Addison's

C01
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What is it?

Addison's disease is a hormonal disorder which occurs when the adrenal glands (glands located above the kidney that help the body deal with stress) do not produce enough hormones (cortisol and aldosterone). The decrease in the adrenal gland function can be due to diseases that result from the body's immune system, bleeding into the adrenals, and infection.

What do you need to know?

Population at risk

Because the causes of adrenal gland problems vary, the risk increases with any of the following situations:

- Presence of other autoimmune disorders like thyroid disease or type 1 diabetes (insulin-dependent)
- Intake of blood thinners
- Severe drop in the blood pressure of a hospitalized patient

Symptoms

The disease is characterized by:

- loss of appetite
- weight loss.
- low blood sugar.
- muscle weakness, fatigue
- darkening of the skin
- irritability, depression and mood swings
- low blood pressure

Treatment options

The main therapy for Addison is replacement of the adrenal hormones. These are mainly two: cortisol and aldosterone.

Cortisol is important for the body to deal with stress and can be replaced by medicines like hydrocortisone,

prednisone, or dexamethasone. Aldosterone is important in maintaining blood pressure and can be replaced by fludrocortisone.

Drugs



- Take hydrocortisone or a similar medicine to replace cortisol hormone as prescribed by your physician.
- If you are sick with a temperature higher than 38.5°C or experiencing nausea and diarrhea, you need to double up the cortisol dose, until the illness improves.
- Report side effects of medications such as changes in blood pressure, dizziness, weight changes, or swelling.
- Do not stop hydrocortisone abruptly; it should be tapered as ordered by your physician.

Diet



- Increase fluid intake if you have excessive perspiration to prevent dehydration.
- Follow a special diet as instructed by your physician and dietitian.

Activity



- Avoid strenuous activity in hot and humid weather.
- Avoid physical stress.

Considerations



- Report to the doctor or go to the nearest emergency room immediately if you have the following signs and symptoms: weakness, decrease in blood pressure, confusion, infection, abdominal pain, fatigue or weight loss.
- Seek medical advice in case you have increased your hydrocortisone dose for more than two days.
- Do follow up visits on regular basis.

The content of this educational leaflet is of general information. Ask your physician or health care provider if this content applies to you.

Prepared by the Nursing Services in coordination with other health care disciplines.

