New Zealand Formulary
PATIENT INFORMATION

DEXAMETHASONE

dex-a-meth-ah-sone

What does it do?

Dexamethasone is a steroid medicine used to treat and prevent some conditions that cause inflammation. It is also sometimes used for other conditions, such as severe nausea and vomiting.

Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you have heart failure, high blood pressure, diabetes, glaucoma, osteoporosis (weak bones), a mood disorder, or if you have ever had a seizure.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.

How should you take it?

Take *dexamethasone* regularly as directed. You can take it with or without food.
Tablet: Take with a glass of water.
Liquid: Measure carefully with an oral syringe or measuring spoon.

What if you forget a dose?

If it is nearly time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and take your next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, take the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not take two doses at the same time.

Can you take other medicines?

Some medicines available without a prescription may react with *dexamethasone* including:

- anti-inflammatories, such as diclofenac (e.g. Voltaren®), ibuprofen (e.g. Nurofen®), or aspirin (e.g. Disprin®, in doses used for pain relief). These can also be found in some cold and flu medicines (e.g. Nurofen Cold and Flu®).

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

Side Effects	Recommended action
Changes in vision Peeing more often, feeling thirsty Muscle or bone aches and pains	Tell your doctor
Mood changes, restlessness, trouble sleeping Weight gain, swollen feet or legs Acne	Tell your doctor if troublesome
Stomach upset	Take with food and tell your doctor if symptoms continue

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- If you take *dexamethasone* in large doses or for a long time, it is dangerous to stop taking it suddenly. Your doctor may reduce the dose gradually when it is time to stop.
- Long-term use of *dexamethasone* may cause side effects such as: round face, change in body shape, change in hair growth, thin skin, weak bones, increased blood pressure and diabetes.
- Long-term use of *dexamethasone* can weaken your immune system, making it harder for your body to fight infections. Tell your doctor if you become unwell or come into contact with someone who has a contagious infection such as chicken pox or measles.
- Ask your doctor what vaccines you might need before you start and while you are taking *dexamethasone*. You should not have a live vaccine while taking *dexamethasone*.
- It is important to tell anyone who gives you medical or dental treatment that you are taking *dexamethasone*.
- *Dexamethasone* liquid expires 7 days after you first open the bottle. If you have any liquid leftover after 7 days, take it back to your pharmacy.