About dexamethasone and hydrocortisone

- Dexamethasone and hydrocortisone are both corticosteroids; they have a role in treating COVID-19 in certain people.
- For treating COVID-19:
 - dexamethasone can be given orally or intraveously
 - hydrocortisone can only be given intravenously.
- The marketing authorisations cover treating COVID-19 as described in this briefing (use is **not** off-label).

See MHRA CAS alert: 3 September for full details

Place in therapy

Offer dexamethasone or hydrocortisone to people with severe or critical COVID-19 (in line with updated WHO guidance); that is, people with any of the following:

- acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)
- sepsis or septic shock
- other conditions that would normally need life-sustaining therapies such as ventilation or vasopressor therapy
- signs of severe respiratory distress
- oxygen saturation <90% (or deteriorating) on room air
- increased respiratory rate (>30 breaths per minute in adults and children over 5 years).

Corticosteroids should **not** normally be used in people with COVID-19 that is not severe or critical, because there is the possibility of harm to such people.

These recommendations are based on a meta-analysis of 7 randomised controlled trials. The strongest evidence came from the UK-based RECOVERY trial of dexamethasone (see page 3). This contributed 59% of patient data in the meta-analysis.

There is no evidence directly comparing dexamethasone and hydrocortisone in COVID-19.



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Dosages

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The recommended dosage and duration of treatment for adults is:

- For dexamethasone:
 - 6 mg once a day **orally** for 7 to 10 days (three 2 mg tablets or 15 ml of 2 mg/5 ml oral solution) **or**
 - 6 mg once a day **intravenously** for 7 to 10 days (1.8 ml of 3.3 mg/ml ampoules [5.94 mg]).
- For hydrocortisone:
 - 50 mg every 8 hours **intravenously** (0.5 ml of 100 mg/ml solution, powder for solution for injection/infusion is also available). This may be continued for up to 28 days for patients with septic shock.

Treatment should **stop** if the person is discharged from hospital before the 10 day course is completed.

For the dosage in children and young people, see the manufacturers' summaries of product characteristics and the BNF for Children.

See MHRA CAS alert: 3 September for full details

Treatment considerations



Follow local policies on **gastroprotection** during corticosteroid treatment.

If a person is **pregnant** or **breastfeeding**, the benefits of corticosteroids are thought to outweigh the risks. There is no convincing evidence that systemic corticosteroids increase the incidence of congenital abnormalities.

Coadministration of corticosteroids with other medicines for treating COVID-19 has not been studied - see the COVID-19 drug interations checker

- No clinically significant interaction is likely between remdesivir and dexamethasone or hydrocortisone.
- Atazanavir and lopinavir/ritonavir may increase concentrations of hydrocortisone.

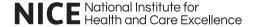
Useful links

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For side effects, cautions and contraindications, see the BNF and BNF for Children.

Any suspected adverse drug reactions (ADRs) for corticosteroids in COVID-19 should be reported via the COVID-19 Yellow Card reporting site.

Outcome data for all people with COVID-19 should be captured through the <u>ISARIC 4C Clinical Characterisation</u> Protocol case report forms.



The RECOVERY trial: dexamethasone



Study details

- Phase 3, open label, randomised controlled trial.
- UKRI/NIHR funded.

Setting

• 176 UK hospitals.

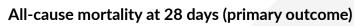
Population

- 6425 hospitalised patients of any age with known or suspected SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- Mean age was 66 years, 36% were female, 89% had laboratory-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection.
- 24% were not receiving respiratory support at study entry, 60% were receiving supplementary oxygen without invasive ventilation, and 16% were receiving invasive mechanical ventilation (of whom 83% were aged under 70 years).
- 25% also received azithromycin, 3% or fewer received lopinavir/ ritonavir, hydroxychloroquine, sarilumab or tocilizumab.

Treatment and comparison

• Usual care plus either dexamethasone 6 mg once a day (orally or intravenous) for up to 10 days or until discharge if sooner (median duration 7 days) or placebo.

Results



Dexamethasone statistically significantly reduced all-cause **mortality** at 28 days compared with usual care alone:

- In patients ventilated at study entry: 29.3% (dexamethasone) compared with 41.4% (control), rate ratio 0.64, 95% confidence interval (CI) 0.51 to 0.81.
- In patients receiving oxygen without invasive ventilation at study entry: 23.3% (dexamethasone) compared with 26.2% (control), rate ratio 0.82, 95% CI 0.72 to 0.94.

There was no **statistically significant benefit** in all-cause mortality in patients who did not need respiratory support at the start of the study, and the results include the possibility of harm in such people (17.8% compared with 14.0%, rate ratio 1.19, 95%CI 0.91 to 1.55).

Findings were similar in analyses restricted to patients with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection and without adjustment for age.

Information on adverse effects was not reported.

References

MHRA: CAS Alert 3 September 2020.

World Health Organization: Corticosteroids for COVID-19.

Interim guidance. 2 September 2020.

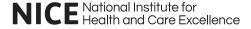
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WHO REACT Working Group: Association between administration of systemic corticosteroids and mortality among critically ill patients with

COVID-19: A meta-analysis. JAMA, September 2020.

The RECOVERY Collaborative Group: Dexamethasone in hospitalized patients with Covid-19 — Preliminary Report. New Eng J Med, July 2020.





Communicating benefits with patients, their families, and carers



For patients who did not need respiratory support at the start of the study

Dexamethasone was **not shown to reduce the risk of dying**, and an increase in the risk of dying from dexamethasone cannot be ruled out.

For patients who were on oxyger of the study	n, but not mechanical ventilation, at the start
	On average, for every 100 patients who had dexamethasone:
	3 patients did not die within 28 days, because they had dexamethasone .
	74 patients did not die within 28 days, but would not have died whether they had dexamethasone or not.
222222222	23 patients died even though they had dexamethasone.

On average, for every 100 patients who had dexamethasone: 12 patients did not die within 28 days, because they had dexamethasone. 59 patients did not die within 28 days, but would not have died whether they had dexamethasone or not. 29 patients died even though they had dexamethasone.

These risks and benefits were based on data from The RECOVERY Trial (see page 3 for more information)

