Steroid Induced Diabetes

What are steroid medicines?
Steroids are a type of medicine that may be given as part of your treatment for cancer. The most common steroid medicines used are hydrocortisone, prednisone and dexamethasone.

What is high blood sugar (hyperglycemia)?
Your blood glucose (blood sugar) level is the amount of sugar in your blood. A high blood sugar level also known as hyperglycemia, means there is too much sugar in your blood.

What is steroid induced diabetes?
• After you eat, your body breaks down food into a type of sugar called glucose. Your pancreas releases a hormone called insulin into your blood. Insulin helps your body use the glucose for energy.
• When you take steroid medicine, you can have a side effect known as “insulin resistance”. This happens when your insulin does not work well and your blood sugar level goes higher than normal. This is called steroid induced diabetes or steroid induced hyperglycemia.

How can I manage steroid induced diabetes?
• A blood glucose meter can be used to test the amount of sugar in your blood.
• Check your blood sugar levels at home and write down all of your test results on a blood glucose record sheet. Bring this record sheet with you to every clinic visit and show it to your doctor.
• Diet, exercise, medicine and/or insulin can all be used to help control your blood sugar level. Your doctor, nurse and dietitian will talk with you about how to use these.

• It is important to keep track of any changes to your medicines. If the amount of steroid medicine you take changes, your insulin or diabetes medicine may also need to be changed.

**Does everyone who takes steroid medicine get steroid induced diabetes?**

• No, you may not develop steroid induced diabetes even if you take steroid medicine.

• You are most at risk for steroid induced diabetes if you are already at risk for Type 2 Diabetes and
  ► You take steroid medicine for a long time
  ► You take high doses of steroid medicine

**Will I always have steroid induced diabetes?**

• This condition may go away after you stop the steroid medicine.

• If you are already at risk for diabetes, you may still have high blood sugar after you stop the steroid medicine.

• If you get Type 2 Diabetes your doctor, nurse, or dietitian will talk with you about how to manage it. Diabetes can be treated with medicine, diet, exercise and/or insulin.

**How can I find out more information?**

Your health care team will work with you to help you learn how to manage your blood sugar levels.

If you would like to learn more about how to manage diabetes, ask your health care team about The Ohio State Wexner Medical Center’s Outpatient Diabetes Education Program.