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

What is steroid induced diabetes?
- After you eat a meal, your body breaks down food into a type of sugar called glucose. Insulin is a hormone made by your pancreas. The pancreas releases insulin into the bloodstream to help the body’s cells use the glucose for energy.
- When you take steroid medicine, you can have a side effect known as “insulin resistance”. This happens because the insulin in your body does not work properly and your blood sugar can go 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 sugars. Your doctor, nurse and registered dietitian will talk with you about how to use these to help control your blood sugar.

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

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

• Not everyone who takes a steroid medicine will develop steroid induced diabetes.

• People who are at risk for type 2 diabetes that take high doses of steroid medicine or take steroids for a long period of time are at risk for developing steroid induced diabetes.

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

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

• Some people who are at a higher risk for getting diabetes may still have high blood sugars after they stop taking steroid medicine.

• Once you stop taking steroid medicine and your blood sugar levels stay high, you may have Type 2 Diabetes. This 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 understand 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.