Corticosteroids for Fetal Lung Maturity

Other Names: Betamethasone (Celestone®); Dexamethasone (Decadron®)

Why is this drug prescribed?
- When a baby is born too early, their lungs are not yet fully developed, and they have problems breathing. Corticosteroids (kor-ti-koh-STER-oids) may be given to the mother to speed up the development of the baby's lungs before it is born.
- These steroids are not the same as anabolic steroids that are sometimes abused by athletes.

Benefits to the Preterm Infant
This drug can lower the risk of:
- Lung disease called Respiratory Distress Syndrome (RDS) after birth. For more information, read the handout, Respiratory Distress Syndrome and Surfactant Therapy.
- Bleeding within the brain called Intraventricular Hemorrhage (IVH). For more information, read the handout, Intraventricular Hemorrhage (IVH).
- Other problems that may cause harm to babies that are born too soon such as intestinal infections called Necrotizing Enterocolitis.

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**Side Effects**

**For the Infant**
- Does not affect the physical growth and development of the baby.
- Baby may not be as active 2 to 5 days after these injections.

**For the Mother**
Call your doctor if you have any of these side effects:
- Slight risk of infection, if the bag of water around the baby is broken.
- Soreness at the injection site.
- Blurred vision.
- Muscle cramps or weakness.
- Unable to sleep, nervousness, unusual moods.
- Limited fetal movement after 5 days.

**How medicine is given:**
- Betamethasone (Celestone®): 2 doses of 12 mg given 24 hours apart by an intramuscular injection
- Dexamethasone (Decadron®): 4 doses of 6 mg given 12 hours apart orally or by an intravenous injection

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.