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 after birth, called Respiratory Distress Syndrome (RDS).
- Bleeding within the brain, called Intraventricular Hemorrhage (IVH).
- Other problems that may cause harm to babies that are born too soon, such as death of tissue in the intestine, called Necrotizing Enterocolitis (NEC).

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 healthcare provider 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 the medicine is given

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