

Patient information

Antenatal corticosteroids

• Making an informed choice

What are Steroids?

Corticosteroids are a man made version of a chemical produced by the body.

They can be given as an injection into your arm or leg to reduce the risk of complications to your unborn baby.

At West Suffolk dexamethasone is the drug used and it is given as two injections 12 to 24 hours apart- this is known as a course of steroids.

If you choose to have steroids your Doctor may recommend that you are monitored in hospital for 24hrs if there are risk factors for either you or your baby

STEROIDS < 34 weeks reduce the risk of



What are the risks of Steroids?

Steroids are generally thought to be safe. There is no risk to the mother but they may impact on blood sugar levels in diabetic mothers, and babies born after receiving steroids may have low blood sugars.

Some recent studies have shown an association between babies born after 37 weeks gestation who have received steroids, and an increased chance of lower academic ability, special educational needs and behavioural problems. More research is needed to confirm this.

What are the benefits of Steroids?

Steroids reduce the risk of Respiratory Distress Syndrome (RDS), bleeding in the brain, serious infections and bowel inflammation.

They benefit babies born extremely preterm the most. A single course of steroids increases the chance of survival.

Steroids have the best effect if given between 24 hours and one week of delivery but there is still some benefit if delivery occurs <24 hours after being given.

Who may benefit from Steroids?

Anyone between 24 and 34+6 weeks pregnant:

- at risk of preterm delivery or in preterm labour.
- Who requires early delivery as they or their baby are at increased risk
- Anyone having an elective caesarean section at less than 39 weeks pregnant

If you are between 37-39 weeks and planning an elective caesarean section, your Doctor will discuss the need for steroids on an individual basis

If you are between 22 - 24 weeks and at risk of labour, your doctor will discuss the benefit of steroids with you on a individual basis

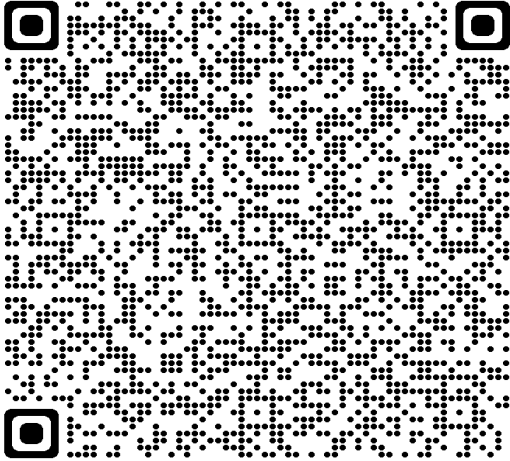
NEC—Necrotizing Enterocolitis— A serious condition characterized by the inflammation and death of intestinal tissue

IVH—Intraventricular haemorrhage - Bleeding in the brain

References

RCOG Corticosteroids in Pregnancy to reduce complications from being born prematurely- patient information leaflets. October 2022

[Corticosteroids in pregnancy to reduce complications from being born prematurely – patient information leaflet | RCOG](#)



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