



DEXAMETHASONE

OTHER NAMES: Decadron[®], Dexasone[®], Hexadrol[®], Deronil[®]

PURPOSE: Dexamethasone is used in the treatment of some types of cancer. It may also be used to reduce symptoms of the cancer or the side effects of cancer treatments, such as pain, inflammation, fluid retention, and nausea.

ADMINISTRATION: Dexamethasone is taken by mouth in the form of tablets.
Take with food.

SIDE EFFECTS: Not all patients will experience all side effects.

SIDE EFFECT	MANAGEMENT
Stomach irritation, burning or pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take dexamethasone with food.• Antacids may be helpful.• Avoid alcohol since it is irritating to the stomach.
Muscle weakness, muscle wasting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This will improve when you decrease or stop taking dexamethasone.
Difficulty sleeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid sleeping during the day or set a time limit. Try to have a regular schedule.
Muscle cramps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Massage muscles that cramp or ask someone to massage for you
Nervousness, irritability, agitation, personality changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This returns to normal when you stop taking dexamethasone or with a decreased dose
Increased appetite and weight gain	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consult a dietitian if weight gain is a concern.
Diabetes - dexamethasone may affect blood sugar levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tell your doctor if you are diabetic.• Test your blood sugar levels regularly.
Rounding of the face	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This will disappear when you decrease or stop taking dexamethasone.

OTHER IMPORTANT PRECAUTIONS:

- Do not stop taking dexamethasone abruptly. If you have been taking dexamethasone for a long period of time, you must taper the dose exactly as directed by your doctor. Sudden withdrawal can cause headache, nausea, weakness, and low blood pressure, which could be life threatening.

Be sure that you have enough tablets until your next appointment. Contact your doctor or pharmacy if you do not have enough.

- If you have abdominal pain or dark tarry stools, report this to your doctor as soon as possible.

- Because dexamethasone may affect the immune system, you may be at a greater risk for infections.
- Other medications may interact with dexamethasone. Do not start taking new medications without checking with your doctor or pharmacist. Tell your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist if you are taking any other prescription or non-prescription medicines, vitamins, or herbs.
- Inform other doctors, dentists, or pharmacists that you are taking dexamethasone.
- Inform your doctor, nurse, and pharmacist if you develop any new allergies or sensitivities.
- If you experience any symptoms or problems not listed above, inform your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.

STORAGE:

- Store dexamethasone at room temperature away from heat, direct light, and moisture.
- Whenever possible, return unused medication to the pharmacy from which it was dispensed for proper disposal.

If you have any questions regarding this or any other drug therapy, please phone your cancer centre.

Cross Cancer Institute – (780) 432-8771, Tom Baker Cancer Centre – (403) 521-3764
Central Alberta Cancer Centre – (403) 343-4802, Grande Prairie Cancer Centre – (780) 538-7288
Lethbridge Cancer Centre – (403) 329-0633, Medicine Hat Cancer Centre – (403) 529-8817

OR
