

# Dexamethsone<sup>®</sup>

Dexamethasone

## Consumer Medicine Information

### What is in this leaflet

This leaflet answers some common questions about **Dexamethsone**. It does not contain all the available information. It does not take the place of talking to your doctor or pharmacist.

All medicines have risks and benefits. Your doctor has weighed the risks of you taking **Dexamethsone** against the benefits they expect it will have for you.

**If you have any concerns about taking this medicine, ask your doctor or pharmacist.**

**Keep this leaflet with the medicine.** You may need to read it again.

### What Dexamethsone is used for

**Dexamethsone** is used to treat the allergy or inflammation type symptoms associated with the many different conditions.

**Dexamethsone** belongs to a group of medicines called corticosteroids.

Your doctor may have prescribed **Dexamethsone** for another reason. **Ask your doctor if you have any questions about why Dexamethsone has been prescribed for you.**

**Dexamethsone** is not addictive.

This medicine is available only with a doctor's prescription.

### Before you take Dexamethsone

#### **When you must not take it**

**Do not take Dexamethsone if you have an allergy to:**

- Any medicine containing dexamethasone
- any of the ingredients listed at the end of this leaflet.

If you have an allergic reaction you may get a skin rash, have difficulty in breathing, get symptoms of hayfever or feel faint.

**Do not take Dexamethsone if you have an uncontrolled infection.**

**Do not take Dexamethsone after the expiry date (EXP) printed on the pack.** If it has expired or is damaged, return it to your pharmacist for disposal.

**Do not take Dexamethsone if the bottle shows signs of having been tampered with.**

**If you are not sure whether you should start taking Dexamethsone, talk to your doctor.**

#### **Before you start to take it**

**Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you have allergies to:**

- any other medicines
- any other substances, such as foods, preservatives or dyes

**Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are pregnant or intend to become pregnant.** Your doctor or pharmacist can discuss with you the possible risks and benefits of

you taking **Dexamethsone** during pregnancy.

**Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are breast-feeding or plan to breast-feed.** Your doctor can discuss with you the risks and benefits involved.

Like most corticosteroid medicines, **Dexamethsone** is not recommended while you are breast-feeding.

**Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you have or have had any medical conditions, especially the following:**

- unusually high stress due to trauma or infection
- adrenal gland problems
- an infection
- eye problems
- liver problems
- diabetes
- tuberculosis

**If you have not told your doctor or pharmacist about any of the above, tell them before you start taking Dexamethsone.**

#### **Taking other medicines**

**Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking any other medicines, including any that you buy without a prescription from your pharmacy, supermarket or health food shop.**

Some medicines and **Dexamethsone** may interfere with each other. These include:

- barbiturates – a group of medicines used as tranquillisers.
- phenytoin – a drug used to treat epilepsy.
- rifampicin – an antibiotic
- oral contraceptives
- vaccinations

These medicines may be affected by **Dexamethsone**, or may affect how well it works. You may need different amounts of your medicine, or you may need to take different medicines. Your doctor or pharmacist will advise you.

Your doctor and pharmacist have more information on medicines to be careful with or avoid while taking **Dexamethsone**.

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## How to take Dexamethsone

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### *How much to take*

**Follow all directions given to you by your doctor and pharmacist carefully.** They may differ from the information contained in this leaflet.

Your doctor or pharmacist will tell you how many tablets you will need to take each day. This depends on your condition and whether or not you are taking any other medicines.

**If you do not understand the instructions on the bottle, ask your doctor or pharmacist for help.**

### *How to take it*

Swallow the tablets with a glass of water.

### *When to take it*

**How often you take Dexamethsone depends on what condition is being treated.**

Do not miss any doses and do not stop taking the medicine even if you feel better as this may make your symptoms worse.

### *How long to take it*

This will depend on your condition and your response to the treatment. Some people will need to take **Dexamethsone** for short periods of time, whereas, other people may require long term therapy.

**Continue taking your medicine for as long as your doctor tells you.** Do not stop taking it suddenly because your symptoms may worsen or come back.

### *If you forget to take it*

**If you miss a dose of Dexamethsone, whether you should take it or not will depend on how many times a day your doctor has told you to take Dexamethsone.**

- **If you take one dose a day-** take the missed dose as soon as possible, then go back to your regular dosing schedule. If you do not remember until the next day, skip the missed dose and do not double the next one.
- **If you take several doses a day-** take the missed dose as soon as possible, then go back to your regular dosing schedule.
- **If you take a dose on alternate days.** If you miss a dose and remember it the same morning, take it straight away, then continue as you normally would. If you do not remember the missed dose until later in the day, wait and take it the following morning. Then skip a day before continuing your regular dosage schedule.

**Do not take a double dose to make up for any missed dose.** This may increase the chance of you getting an unwanted side effect.

**If you are not sure what to do, ask your doctor or pharmacist.**

**If you have trouble remembering to take your medicine, ask your pharmacist for some hints.**

### *If you take too much (overdose)*

**Immediately telephone your doctor or pharmacist or the Poisons Information Centre (telephone 13 11 26), or go to Accident and Emergency at your**

**nearest hospital, if you think that you or anyone else may have taken too much Dexamethsone. Do this even if there are no signs of discomfort or poisoning.**

You may need urgent medical attention.

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## While you are taking Dexamethsone

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### *Things you must do*

**Take Dexamethsone exactly as directed by your doctor. Do not stop taking it suddenly because your symptoms may worsen or come back.**

Try not to miss any doses.

Continue to take this medicine even if you feel better, unless your doctor tells you to stop.

If you are taking **Dexamethsone** for a long period of time, you must have regular checkups with your doctor. This is especially important for children who are taking **Dexamethsone**.

Tell your doctor if you get a serious infection or injury.

**Tell any other doctors, dentists, and pharmacists who are treating you that you are taking Dexamethsone.**

**If you are about to be started on any new medicine, tell your doctor, dentist or pharmacist that you are taking Dexamethsone.**

**If you plan to have surgery that needs a general anaesthetic, tell your doctor or dentist that you are taking Dexamethsone. The trauma of the operation or surgery may mean that your dose of Dexamethsone needs to be adjusted to cover this stressful time.**

**Tell your doctor immediately if you are diabetic and if you notice any change in your blood or urine sugar readings.**

**Dexamethsone** may affect your blood sugar levels as it can affect the body's ability to handle glucose. For diabetics, this means that your diabetes may become more severe. For others, diabetes may develop for the first time while taking corticosteroids such as **Dexamethsone**.

**If you become pregnant while taking Dexamethsone, tell your doctor or pharmacist.**

### **Things you must not do**

**Do not give Dexamethsone to anyone else, even if they have the same or a similar condition to you.**

**Do not take Dexamethsone to treat any other complaints unless your doctor tells you to.**

**Do not stop taking Dexamethsone or lower the dosage, without checking with your doctor or pharmacist.**

**If you stop taking Dexamethsone suddenly, the symptoms of your condition may return or you may develop symptoms of certain hormone deficiencies such as fainting, weakness, restlessness, nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, muscle weakness or joint pain.**

**Do not have any immunisations while you are taking Dexamethsone.** Immunisation with 'live' vaccine may interfere with **Dexamethsone** or not work at all while you are taking **Dexamethsone**.

### **Things to be careful of**

Avoid close contact with anyone who has a contagious disease such as chicken pox or measles.

Exposure to such diseases while you are taking **Dexamethsone**, especially if large doses are prescribed, can put you at greater risk of developing these diseases if you have not had them before. Tell your doctor immediately if you think

you have been exposed to chickenpox or measles.

### **Things to be aware of**

**Dexamethsone** is not known to cause drowsiness and does not appear to affect the ability to drive or operate machinery.

As with any new medicine, you should take care when driving, operating machinery or drinking alcohol until you know how **Dexamethsone** affects you.

The signs and symptoms of infections such as fever or inflammation may be hidden by the anti-inflammatory action of **Dexamethsone**. You should see your doctor for medical advice for any but the most minor infections.

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## **Side effects**

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**Tell your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible if you do not feel well while you are taking Dexamethsone.**

**Dexamethsone** helps most people, but it may have unwanted side effects in a few people. All medicines can have side effects. Sometimes they are serious, most of the time they are not. You may need medical attention if you get some of the side effects.

If you are over 65 years of age you may have an increased chance of getting side effects.

### **Short term use-**

When **Dexamethsone** is taken for short periods of time, even at high doses, it is unlikely to produce harmful effects.

**Ask your doctor or pharmacist to answer any questions you may have.**

### **Longer term use-**

When **Dexamethsone** is taken for long periods of time and in high

doses the risk of side effects is greater.

**Following is a list of possible side effects. Do not be alarmed by this list. You may not experience any of them.**

**Tell your doctor if you notice any of the following and they worry you:**

- \* General changes to your body:
  - slowed growth in children
  - bloating or rounding of the face
  - cramps or weakness in the muscles of the arms and legs
  - water retention leading to swollen legs and feet
  - irregular heart beat
  - weight gain
  - headache
  - dizziness
  - irregular menstrual periods

- \* Changes in your immune system:
  - an increased seriousness or frequency of infections

- \* Changes in your gastrointestinal system:
  - nausea (feeling sick)
  - vomiting
  - indigestion, stomach pain or discomfort
  - increased appetite
  - diarrhoea or constipation
  - reduced appetite

- \* Changes in your behaviour:
  - mood changes
  - anxiety or nervousness
  - restlessness
  - difficulty sleeping (insomnia)
  - personality changes

- \* Changes to your skin:
  - poor wound healing
  - red or flushed face
  - increased sweating
  - easy bruising
  - extra hair growth
  - acne
  - red or purple streaks on skin
  - skin thinning
  - itchy rash
  - unusual bleeding or bruising under the skin

- \* Changes in your eyes:
  - cataracts
  - eyes sticking out too far

- decreased or blurred vision

**Tell your doctor immediately or go to Accident and Emergency at your nearest hospital if you notice any of the following symptoms:**

- severe stomach or intestinal pain
- sudden changes in your vision
- fits
- major psychiatric changes
- symptoms such as severe dizziness, fainting, weakness, chest pain or irregular heart beat
- swelling of the face, lips, mouth, tongue or throat which may cause difficulty in swallowing or breathing

These are very serious side effects. You may need urgent medical attention or hospitalisation. (These side effects are rare.)

**When Dexmethsone is taken for long periods of time, it is important to visit your doctor regularly for check ups. Some side effects can only be detected by your doctor.**

Such side effects can include changes in:

- strength of bones
- blood sugar level (diabetes)
- eye pressure (glaucoma)
- cholesterol levels
- hormone levels
- sperm count
- blood pressure (hypertension)
- certain blood cells
- the way nerves work
- heart beat and rhythm

**Tell your doctor or pharmacist if you notice anything that is making you feel unwell.**

Other side effects not listed above may also occur in some people.

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## After using Dexmethsone

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### Storage

**Keep your tablets in the bottle until it is time to take them.**

If you take the tablets out of the bottle they will not keep well.

**Keep your tablets in a cool dry place where the temperature stays below 30°C.**

**Do not store Dexmethsone or any other medicine in the bathroom or near a sink. Do not leave it on a windowsill or in the car on hot days.** Heat and dampness can destroy some medicines.

**Keep it where children cannot reach it.** A locked cupboard at least one-and-a-half metres above the ground is a good place to store medicines.

### Disposal

**If your doctor or pharmacist tells you to stop taking Dexmethsone or the tablets have passed their expiry date, ask your pharmacist what to do with any that are left over.**

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## Product description

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### What it looks like

**Dexmethsone** is available in white plastic bottles containing 30 tablets.

**Dexmethsone** 0.5 mg tablets are round, white, and marked with **DS/0.5** on one side, and plain on the other side.

**Dexmethsone** 4 mg tablets are round, white, and marked with **DS/4** on one side, and plain on the other side.

### Ingredients

Dexmethsone 0.5 mg tablet contains:

- 0.5mg dexamethasone (active ingredient)
- lactose
- povidone
- magnesium stearate
- wheat starch

Dexmethsone 4 mg tablet contains:

- 4mg dexamethasone (active ingredient)
- lactose
- povidone
- magnesium stearate
- maize starch

### Distributor

Aspen Pharmacare Australia. Pty Ltd  
34-36 Chandos St  
St Leonards NSW 2065 Australia

*Australian Registration Numbers:*

**Dexmethsone 0.5mg:** AUST R 27917

**Dexmethsone 4 mg:** AUST R 27915

*Date of preparation:* June 2000

*Date of amendment:* April 2007

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