

Dexamethasone Injection

There are a number of injectable dexamethasone products available which differ in strength and formulation, therefore prescribers are advised to prescribe **clearly and consistently** so that the patient always receives the intended dose prescribed.

The available products are:

- Dexamethasone injection 3.3mg/ml (Hameln/Hospira)
- Dexamethasone injection 3.8mg/ml (Aspen) - must be stored in a refrigerator at 2-8°C

Prescribers are accustomed to prescribing doses in multiples of 2mg of dexamethasone, so there may be potential risk for administration of incorrect doses.

Studies suggest that the oral bioavailability of dexamethasone is variable and may be less than 80%. Based on 80% oral bioavailability, 4mg oral dexamethasone is approximately equivalent to 3.3mg subcutaneous dexamethasone.

Therefore dexamethasone injection should be prescribed in a dose that is a multiple of 3.3mg or 3.8mg, or one that can be easily measured, to make drawing up of the dose more straightforward and reduce waste.

Several community pharmacies have agreed to maintain a stock of palliative care drugs from a defined list-those pharmacies are asked to add dexamethasone 3.3mg/ml to that list.

Bare in mind that dexamethasone is generally adjusted according to the clinical response.

Hameln/Hospira Conversions Table:

| Oral dexamethasone dose | Parenteral dexamethasone dose using Hameln/Hospira 3.3mg/ml |
|-------------------------|--|
| 2mg | 1.65mg/0.5ml |
| 4mg | 3.3mg/1ml |
| 6mg | 4.95mg/1.5ml |
| 8mg | 6.6mg/2ml |
| 10mg | 8.25mg/2.5ml |
| 12mg | 9.9mg/3ml |

Aspen Conversions Table:

| Oral dexamethasone dose | Parenteral dexamethasone dose using Aspen 3.8mg/ml |
|-------------------------|---|
| 2mg | 1.9mg/0.5ml |
| 4mg | 3.8mg/1ml |
| 6mg | 5.7mg/1.5ml |
| 8mg | 7.6mg/2ml |
| 10mg | 9.5mg/2.5ml |
| 12mg | 11.4mg/3ml |

For further information please see http://www.ukmi.nhs.uk/filestore/ukmiaps/ProductSafetyassessmentforDexamethasone_Sept_2014.pdf or seek specialist advice.

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