

PATIENT INFORMATION

Dexamethasone

Adjuvant therapy

What is adjuvant therapy?

Adjuvant therapy, also known as 'add-ons', adjunct, complementary or alternative therapies, are recognised as an addition to standard assisted reproductive treatment and may be recommended to you with the intention to increase your success during your fertility treatment. There are numerous options available to you when accessing adjuvant therapies, including but not limited to the technology in laboratories, medical procedures, prescribed medications, nutritional supplements, and traditional medicines such as Chinese medicine, including acupuncture.

At present, the effectiveness of many adjuvant therapies is unknown, with little to no evidence that they will increase the success of your treatment or improve live birth rates. However, your health care provider may recommend adjuvant therapy when considering your medical history and tailoring your treatment plan.

It is important to consider the effectiveness, risks and financial costs of adjuvant therapies.

What is dexamethasone and how it is normally used?

Dexamethasone is an active ingredient that belongs to a group of medicines called corticosteroids. Corticosteroids are synthetic versions of cortisol. They help reduce inflammation in your body or suppress your immune system.

Dexamethasone is used in the treatment of many different conditions including severe allergies, severe or chronic asthma, skin problems, arthritis, inflammatory diseases of the bowel, some types of cancer and “autoimmune” diseases. It is also used to prevent or reduce the symptoms of inflammation (such as swelling, redness, pain, tenderness or itching) in any part of the body.

Why is dexamethasone recommended, and will it increase the success of my treatment?

Your fertility specialist may recommend Dexamethasone to you if you have a history of embryo implantation failure or the presence of a high level of natural killer cells in the uterus. It is thought that a localised inflammatory response in the uterus, whether triggered by an embryo transfer procedure or occurring independently, may be a contributing factor to implantation failure. Dexamethasone's anti-inflammatory effect is thought to reduce the localised inflammation in the uterus and decrease the risk of implantation failure.

Dexamethasone may also be recommended to you if you have had a previous or known poor ovarian response to IVF treatments. Low dose dexamethasone may reduce the incidence of poor ovarian response and it may also increase clinical pregnancy rates.

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What are the common side effects?

Some common side effects can include:

- mood changes
- nausea (feeling sick) vomiting
- anorexia (which may result in weight loss)
- increased appetite (which may result in weight gain)
- stomach bloating or irritation
- diarrhoea or constipation

Regarding any additional side effects or contraindications for Dexamethasone, please refer to the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) sheet.

Please notify your fertility specialist if you:

- fluid retention
- trouble sleeping
- bloating of the face and swelling of the abdomen
- weight gain
- irregular periods
- muscle cramps

Are there risks to using dexamethasone during pregnancy?

Dexamethasone is a Category A drug, meaning it has been used by many pregnant women or women of childbearing age, and there is no evidence of increased risk, directly or indirectly, to the baby.

What are the costs?

Cost of Dexamethasone: The cost of Dexamethasone will vary depending on the brand and pharmacy. A box of 500mcg tablets could cost you around \$7.50.

Is Dexamethasone included in the cost of my cycle: Dexamethasone is an additional expense and is not included in the cost of your cycle.

The information provided above is intended for educational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute or replacement for medical advice received from a medical professional. It is important to discuss your individual circumstances and situation with your treating doctor.