



# Brain Tumour Australia Information

## © FACT SHEET 21

### Steroid-Induced Diabetes

#### The Brain– Steroid Induced Diabetes

- Steroids are commonly used in the treatment of brain tumours.
- Steroids are very effective medications for inflammation and swelling in the brain. Because of their side effects, doctors usually prescribe the lowest dose for the shortest amount of time.
- Steroids are a group of medications commonly used in medicine that can have effects on blood glucose for those who have diabetes as well as for those who don't.
- Steroids are also called corticosteroids or glucocorticoids. Some of the most commonly prescribed are hydrocortisone, prednisone and dexamethasone
- A side effect of steroids is their impact on insulin.
- Steroids increase insulin resistance making the insulin less effective. This will cause blood glucose levels to rise if you have diabetes. If you don't have diabetes and your pancreas is able to make additional insulin, your blood glucose will stay within a normal range. If the pancreas can't make enough insulin to keep your blood glucose within a normal range while you are taking steroids, you have what is called steroid-induced diabetes.
- A side effect of taking steroids is collectively known as ~Cushings syndrome.[ a round fuller face appearance] and an increased appetite for food [ especially deserts and sweet foods]
- Very often steroid-induced diabetes goes away when you quit taking the steroids. If you have to continue with steroids long-term, the diabetes may remain. Sometimes steroid-induced diabetes is an early indicator and the person will develop diabetes later in life even when not taking steroids.
- The symptoms of steroid-induced diabetes are the same as when diabetes is caused by any other problem: thirst, frequent urination, and unintentional weight loss. Or, the doctor may pick it up by doing a blood glucose test (over 125 mg /dl when you have fasted over eight hours being diabetic.)
- Also, the management of steroid-induced diabetes may be similar to the management of other causes of diabetes: a more healthy diet, pills or even insulin.
- However, when the dose of steroids is reduced or they are stopped altogether, the diabetes may well go away.
- Having had diabetes once during steroid treatment, though, the pancreas has declared itself borderline. You are at much higher risk of getting it again later, especially if you start steroids again.

***NOTE: Discuss any concerns you may have with your medical treatment team***