

Steroids in Late Pregnancy

This leaflet will help you and your medical team decide if you should take steroids between 34 weeks and 37 weeks pregnant.



This leaflet will look at the **risks** (what might go wrong).

It will look at the **benefits** (how steroids might help).



What are steroids?

Steroids (or Corticosteroids) are a man made version of a chemical your body already makes.

Sometimes you need more steroids than your body is making.



Why might you need steroids?

A baby born **prematurely** (before 37 weeks) is more likely to have trouble breathing than a baby born after 37 weeks.



Babies born before 37 weeks can also have difficulties:

- keeping their bodies at the right temperature
- feeding
- keeping the right amount of sugar in their blood (**blood sugar levels**).



If medical staff think your baby may be born between 24 and 34 weeks they will recommend you take steroids.

How can steroids help?

Taking steroids can mean your baby won't need help to breath.

Taking steroids can mean your baby is in better health in general.



How do you take steroids?

You will be given an injection into a muscle. This might be in your arm, thigh, hip or bottom.

You will have a second injection 24 hours later.

The effect of the steroids lasts for the next 7 days.





What are the benefits of taking steroids?

Your baby is less likely to need help breathing.

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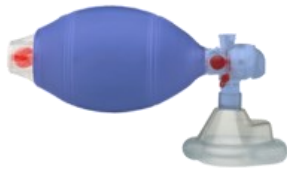
With steroids 11 babies out of 100 need help breathing.

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Without steroids 14 babies out of 100 need help

If your baby needs help breathing they may need:



- extra oxygen
- **facemask breathing** (oxygen is given through a mask over the baby's mouth and nose)
- to be **ventilated** (oxygen is given by a machine through tubes in the baby's mouth and nose).



The baby would be in a **special care baby unit** (where very ill babies are looked after away from the wards).

What are the risks of taking steroids?



Your baby may have **low blood sugars** (not enough sugar in the blood) shortly after birth.



With steroids 24 babies out of 100 have low blood sugars.



Without steroids 15 babies out of 100 have low blood sugars.



A baby with low blood sugar may need extra treatments such as:

- **formula milk** (shop bought milk made just for babies).
- extra care in hospital for a short time.

Usually, your baby will stay with you if they need these extra treatments.

Are there any risks to the baby as they get older?

There has only been one large study looking at babies after the mother had taken steroids in pregnancy.



If the baby was born after 37 weeks there was a bigger chance of:

- **Developmental delay** (when a child takes longer to learn things)

This might include:

- ◇ learning to walk/talk
- ◇ learning new skills
- ◇ getting on with others



- **Psychological problems** (how you think and feel)

There could be problems with:

- ◇ thinking
- ◇ controlling emotions
- ◇ behaviour





Behavioural disorders (Everyone acts badly sometimes. Behavioural disorders are more serious).

The difficult behaviour needs to last for at least 6 months.

This behaviour may cause problems at:

- ◇ school
- ◇ home
- ◇ in social situations

How to decide if taking steroids is right for you.



Use this leaflet to think about the risks and benefits of taking steroids.

You will have time to think about the information.

It can be helpful to:

- talk to people you're close to.
- ask the medical team looking after you if you have any other questions.

