

Information for Patients

Myasthenic Crisis Information for patients on steroid and immunosuppressive treatment for myasthenia gravis

Introduction

You have been given this leaflet because you have or are suspected to have myasthenia gravis, and have been started on, or are about to be started on treatment.

Myasthenic Crisis

A myasthenic crisis is a rare, life threatening occurrence that can occur whilst being treated for myasthenia. In patients who develop myasthenic crisis, the muscles that control breathing weaken, making breathing more difficult. Admission to hospital is often necessary if this occurs, and you might even need to be temporarily placed on a ventilator (breathing machine). In some cases you might need to undergo plasma exchange, where your blood plasma is exchanged for donor plasma which is free of abnormal antibodies.

What can potentially trigger a myasthenic crisis?

- Fevers, coughs, colds, chest infections, aspiration pneumonitis.
- A tumour of your thymus.
- Thyroid disease.
- A change in medicines.
- Pregnancy.
- Stress from trauma, surgery or emotional upset.
- Some contrast dyes used in imaging tests, such as CT scan or MRI.

Things to look out for

- Difficulty breathing.

- Difficulty speaking.
- A weak cough with/without difficulty clearing secretions in your throat.
- The skin around your abdomen or ribs pulling in when you breathe.
- Difficulty swallowing/chewing.

What you must do

If you think you have recently developed any of the above symptoms whilst on treatment for myasthenia, and feel unwell, **you must seek medical advice without delay**. If you are unable to get an urgent, same day review with your GP, you must attend your local Accident and Emergency Department immediately explaining that you have myasthenia and bring along any medication that you are taking.