



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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NOTICE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE OF DEXAMETHASONE FOR THE TREATMENT OF SEVERE COVID-19

On 19 June 2020, the National Department of Health released a statement titled, *Follow up statement on Dexamethasone by the Minister of Health*. The statement summarised the outcomes of the Randomised Evaluation of COVID-19 therapy (RECOVERY) Trial, which reported benefit from the use of dexamethasone in patients with severe COVID-19. The following were the key findings:

- Dexamethasone reduced deaths by one-third in ventilated patients;
- Dexamethasone reduced deaths by one-fifth in patients receiving oxygen only (but not ventilation);
- Dexamethasone did not provide a mortality benefit in patients who did not require respiratory support.

Note: the RECOVERY trial data have yet to be published in a peer-reviewed form, and only summary statements have been released by the trial chief investigators. The full study report and critical details on the outcomes (such as data on adverse effects) are needed before a considered judgment can be made.

Based on the available results of the RECOVERY Trial, dexamethasone is recommended in COVID-19 patients who require respiratory support only (i.e. those requiring ventilation or other forms of oxygen therapy) (see Table 1). In the RECOVERY Trial, prednisone 40mg daily was used in women who were pregnant or breastfeeding. Therapeutic alternatives are also provided in Table 1.

Corticosteroids are not indicated in patients who do not require oxygen or ventilator support, nor should they be used for prophylaxis.

Table 1: Corticosteroid use in patients with COVID-19 requiring respiratory support

Indication: Clinical management of COVID-19	Recommendation	Therapeutic alternatives
COVID-19 patients requiring respiratory support (ventilation or other oxygen therapy).	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dexamethasone*, intravenous, 6mg daily for 10 days.• Prednisone*, oral, 40mg daily for 10 days. <p><i>Note: Pregnant and breast-feeding women were treated with prednisone in the RECOVERY trial.</i></p> <p><i>Note: dexamethasone tablets are only available via Section 21.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Betamethasone, oral or intravenous, 6mg daily for 10 days.

* Dosed according to the RECOVERY Trial

Provinces and Health Care Facilities are requested to distribute and communicate this information.

Comments may be submitted via e-mail:

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Kind regards

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