

# WALK WITH WAPO THIS OCTOBER FOR PITUITARY AWARENESS MONTH AND LEARN ABOUT

## ADRENAL INSUFFICIENCY

**Adrenal insufficiency (AI)** is an endocrine disease where there is a lack of cortisol production from the adrenal glands. This can be caused by adrenal failure (primary AI), diseases affecting the pituitary gland (secondary AI) or problems with the hypothalamic-pituitary adrenal (HPA) axis due to prolonged use of glucocorticoids (tertiary AI).

01

### SYMPTOMS INCLUDE

- Headaches
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness that may lead to fainting
- Abdominal pain and diarrhea
- Craving for salty foods
- Joint or muscle pain and weakness
- Chronic fatigue
- Loss of appetite leading to weight loss
- Irritability, confusion or depression
- Irregular or absent menstrual periods
- Low libido



*"To be diagnosed with a rare disease for life is frightening."*

02

### DIAGNOSIS IS BASED ON

- Presence of symptoms
- Fasting morning cortisol
- Dynamic testing such as cosyntropin stimulation test
- Pituitary MRI (in case of secondary AI), adrenal imaging in select cases



*"Too many physicians state 'it is all over when you take your steroids' and that is not true."*

*"The hospital should provide emergency injection training for patients."*

03

### MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT

- Hormone replacement therapy
- "Stress" dose of hydrocortisone in case of extreme stress, sickness or injury
- Emergency hydrocortisone injection for an adrenal crisis



*"I take medication and it affects my daily life. I have many side effects."*

*"Patients need to remember to take along their emergency kit when traveling."*

04

### LONG-TERM CHALLENGES

- Patients suffer from invisible disabilities such as chronic fatigue which can have a major impact on their daily life.
- Acute illness, without appropriate stress dosing, can lead to an adrenal crisis (emergency situation)! Patients must always carry an emergency hydrocortisone injection kit.
- Early diagnosis by healthcare professionals is crucial in order to avoid a life-threatening adrenal crisis.
- It is a chronic disease and long-term glucocorticoid replacement therapy comes with its own set of side effects and comorbidities that must be addressed.



*"The endocrine nurse was a great help when supporting my family with the emergency crisis injection."*



World Alliance of  
Pituitary Organizations

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