



GEORGIA PERINATAL

CONSULTANTS

BETAMETHASONE

WHAT IS BETAMETHASONE AND WHY IS IT GIVEN?

Betamethasone is a corticosteroid traditionally given to treat inflammation. When given to a pregnant patient before delivery, its purpose is to speed up the baby's lung development. It can also help protect the fetal brain and bowel. Typically betamethasone is given if a preterm delivery is anticipated.

HOW DOES BETAMETHASONE WORK?

In the lungs, incoming oxygen and outgoing carbon dioxide are exchanged in tiny air sacs called alveoli. During an exhalation, the alveoli tend to collapse if a substance called surfactant is not present to keep them open. When the alveoli collapse, gas exchange cannot occur. Betamethasone works by causing the lungs to produce surfactant and therefore improving oxygen delivery.

WHEN AND HOW IS IT ADMINISTERED?

Betamethasone treatment consists of two consecutive intramuscular injections given 24 hours apart. Benefit occurs within 24 hours of initiating therapy. This medication is dispensed by our hospital pharmacy upon request and therefore an appointment with the nursing department is needed in order to ensure the medication is available.

WHAT SIDE EFFECTS CAN I EXPECT?

Possible side effects may include restlessness, difficulty going to sleep, transient increase in blood sugar, and slight fluid build-up in the body. Injection site reactions are common and include soreness, redness and itchiness. If you experience any of these common side effects, apply a cold compress to the area. You may also apply topical Benadryl or 1% hydrocortisone. Do not apply heat or scratch the site as both of these actions will further irritate the site.

Contact your provider right away if you experience an allergic reaction (hives, sudden swelling in face or hands, tingling or swelling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness or difficulty breathing).