



<b>State if the document is a Trust Policy/Procedure or a Clinical Guideline / Drugs Therapeutic Committee Document</b>	<b>Clinical Guidelines</b>
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## **1.0 Introduction**

This document aims to provide pathways to advise on appropriate management of Immunotherapy Related Adverse Events (irAEs). IrAEs can occur early, mostly within weeks to 3 months after initiation of immune checkpoint blockers. However, the first onset of irAEs has been documented as long as 1 year after discontinuation of treatment.

Immunotherapy drugs work with the body's immune system by increasing its natural ability to act against cancer cells.

Side effects can result in severe immune mediated adverse reactions, the most common are itchy skin rashes, diarrhoea leading to an inflammatory colitis type picture, thyroid, adrenal or pituitary dysfunction, pneumonitis, nephritis, hepatitis, uveitis, paresthesia and neuropathy can all occur. It is important to recognise and manage these adverse events early to reduce serious patient related morbidity and mortality.

The mainstay of immunotherapy toxicity management is corticosteroids which is immunosuppressive and therefore suppresses the T cell activating function of the treatment. The following serve as a general guide, it is important to inform the treating oncologist/haematologist as soon as possible or in the event of a hospital admission. It is also important to liaise with medical specialities such as the gastroenterology or endocrine team at L&D, as a proportion of patients may not respond to first line corticosteroids and will have to be admitted to hospital.

## **2.0 Definition**

Immunotherapy is a type of cancer treatment that helps the immune system fight cancer by the use of cytokines and T cells (by the use of check point inhibitors and agonists of co-stimulatory receptors), manipulation of T cells, vaccines and oncolytic viruses. The principal behind these checkpoint inhibitors is to remove the physiological immune 'break' and stimulate the immune system to recognise tumour cells.

## **3.0 Background**

These guidelines have been produced by the Luton & Dunstable University Hospital. The Acute Oncology Service makes recommendations based on evidence-based practice with an extensive review of the available literature to promote best practice in the management of Immunotherapy Related Adverse Events.

## **4.0 Objectives**

1. For all immunotherapy toxicities to be graded according to the adverse event grading criteria & follow guidelines for management of toxicities.
2. To inform the treating oncologist/haematologist as soon as possible or in the event of a hospital admission.
3. To ensure that all patients admitted to hospital 'at risk' of irAEs are recognised.

4. To ensure that the patient has the most appropriate treatment based on a thorough and inclusive assessment of the symptoms.
5. To minimise the risk of upcoming oncological treatments being delayed or dose reduced due to irAEs.
6. To reduce the length of stay in hospital for patients with irAEs as a contributing factor for their admission.
7. To communicate with the Oncology/Haematology treating physician to ensure there is a plan for future treatments, to prevent readmission with further irAEs.
8. Any queries with regard to patients with irAEs should be referred to the:

**Acute Oncology Service** (Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm).  
07917553350 Bleep 011

**Mount Vernon Cancer Centre** (for oncology opinion):  
SpR on Call 020 3826 2020

#### **4.0 Monitoring**

The guidance and pathway is based on this guidance and current best clinical practice. The pathway will be monitored through the Acute Oncology Service (AOS) who will have initial contact with all acutely admitted cancer patients. If the AOS team see that the pathway is not being followed they will educate, audit and report in accordance with the Trust's incident reporting guidelines. The medical teams to inform the GP via discharge letter of the patient's treatment and ongoing support needed

#### **5.0 Communication**

This guidance and the attached pathways are available on the hospital intranet and will be relayed to acute medical doctors in their induction.

#### **6.0 References**

European Society for Medical Oncology (2017) Management of toxicities from immunotherapy: ESMO clinical practice guidelines. Available at:  
<http://www.esmo.org/Guidelines/Supportive-and-Palliative-Care/Management-of-Toxicities-from-Immunotherapy>

Kent and Medway Cancer Collaborative (2017) Guidelines for the management of Immune-related toxicities. Available at:  
<http://www.kentmedwaycancerguide.nhs.uk/EasysiteWeb/getresource.axd?AssetID=466828&type=full&servicetype=Attachment>

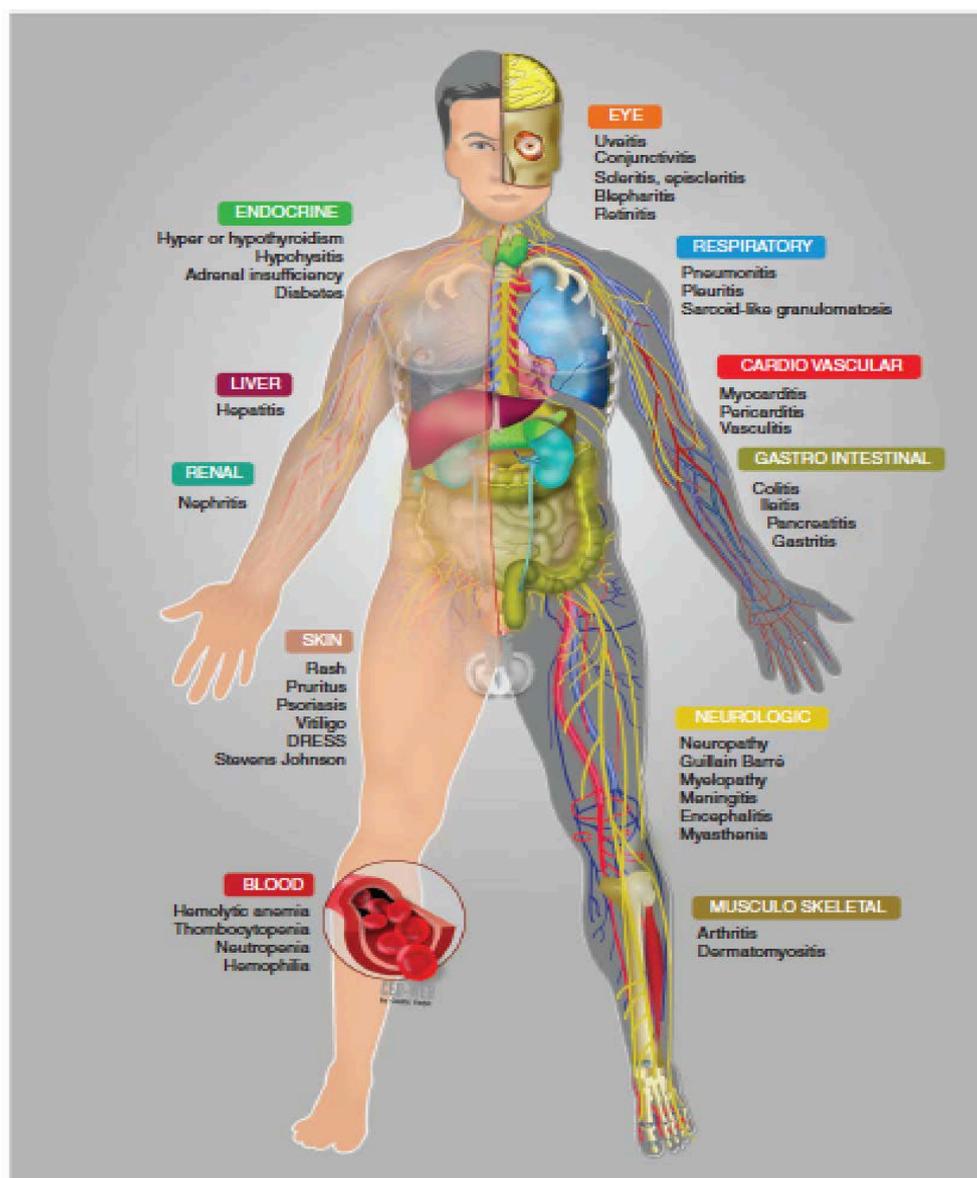
Velindre Cancer Centre (2016) Immunotherapy toxicity guidelines. Available at:  
<http://www.velindrecc.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/documents/1087/Immunotherapy%20Guidelines%20version%201%20%28Oct%202016%29.pdf>

These guidelines have been adapted from the Clatterbridge Cancer Centre's Immunotherapy Guidelines.

## Immunotherapy Related Adverse Effects (irAEs)

irAEs are typically mild to moderate in severity, if they are left unrecognised or untreated, they can become life-threatening. These toxicities can be managed effectively in almost all patients by using established guidelines that stress vigilance and the use of corticosteroids and other immunosuppressive agents when necessary. **For treatment advice on irAEs please see Management guidelines for Immunotherapy Related Adverse Effects.** These guidelines cover initial management of common immunotherapy related toxicities.

**Think could this be an irAEs**



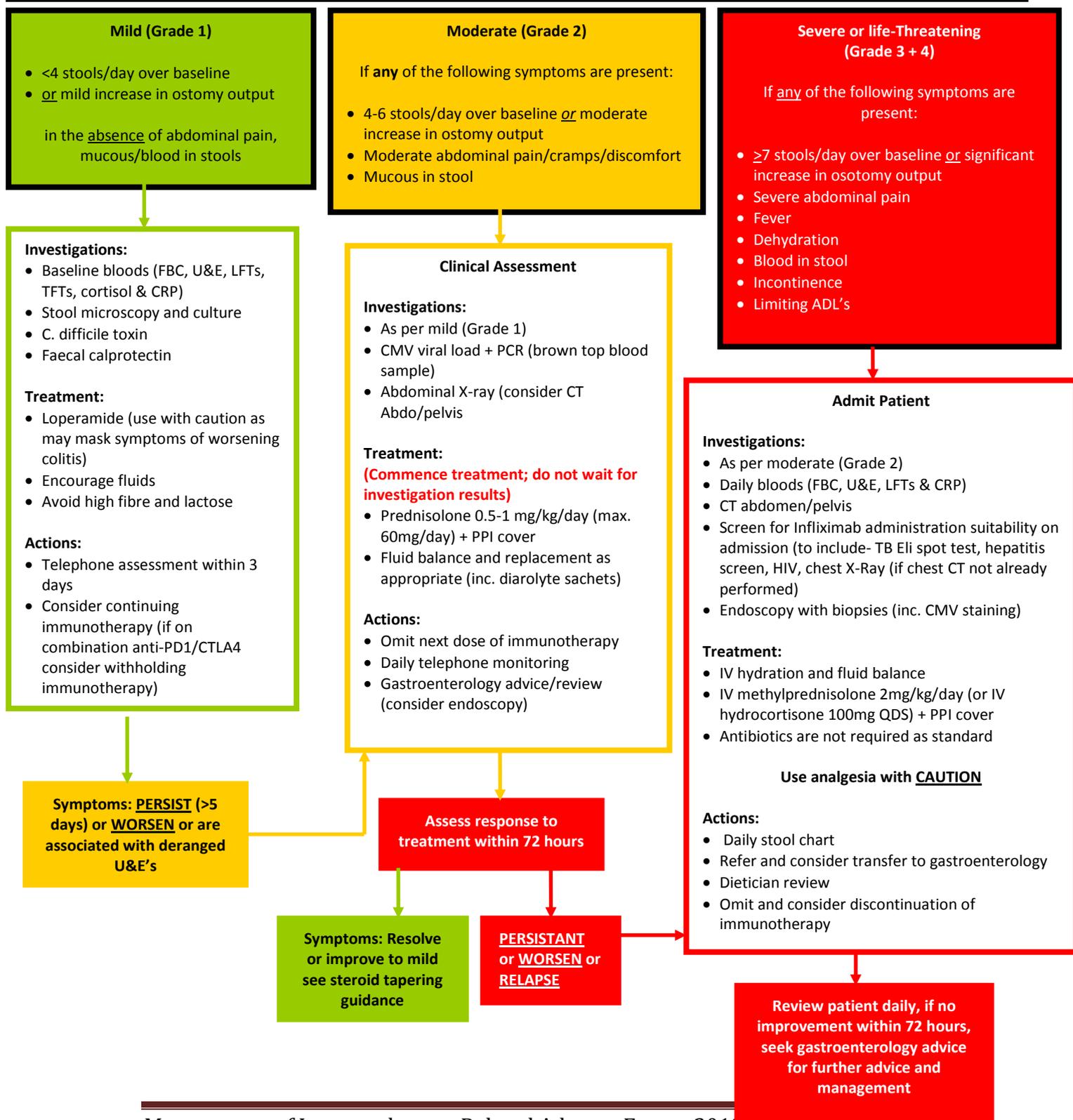
**Please contact the treating oncologist for advice ASAP or Acute Oncology Service (Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm).**  
07917553350 Bleep 011

**Mount Vernon Cancer Centre (for oncology opinion):**  
SpR on Call 020 3826 2020

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**Immune-Related Adverse Event: Diarrhoea**

Gastrointestinal (GI) irAEs are among the most common and although they are typically mild to moderate in severity, if they are left unrecognised or untreated, they can become life-threatening. These toxicities can be managed effectively in almost all patients by using established guidelines that stress vigilance and the use of corticosteroids and other immunosuppressive agents when necessary.



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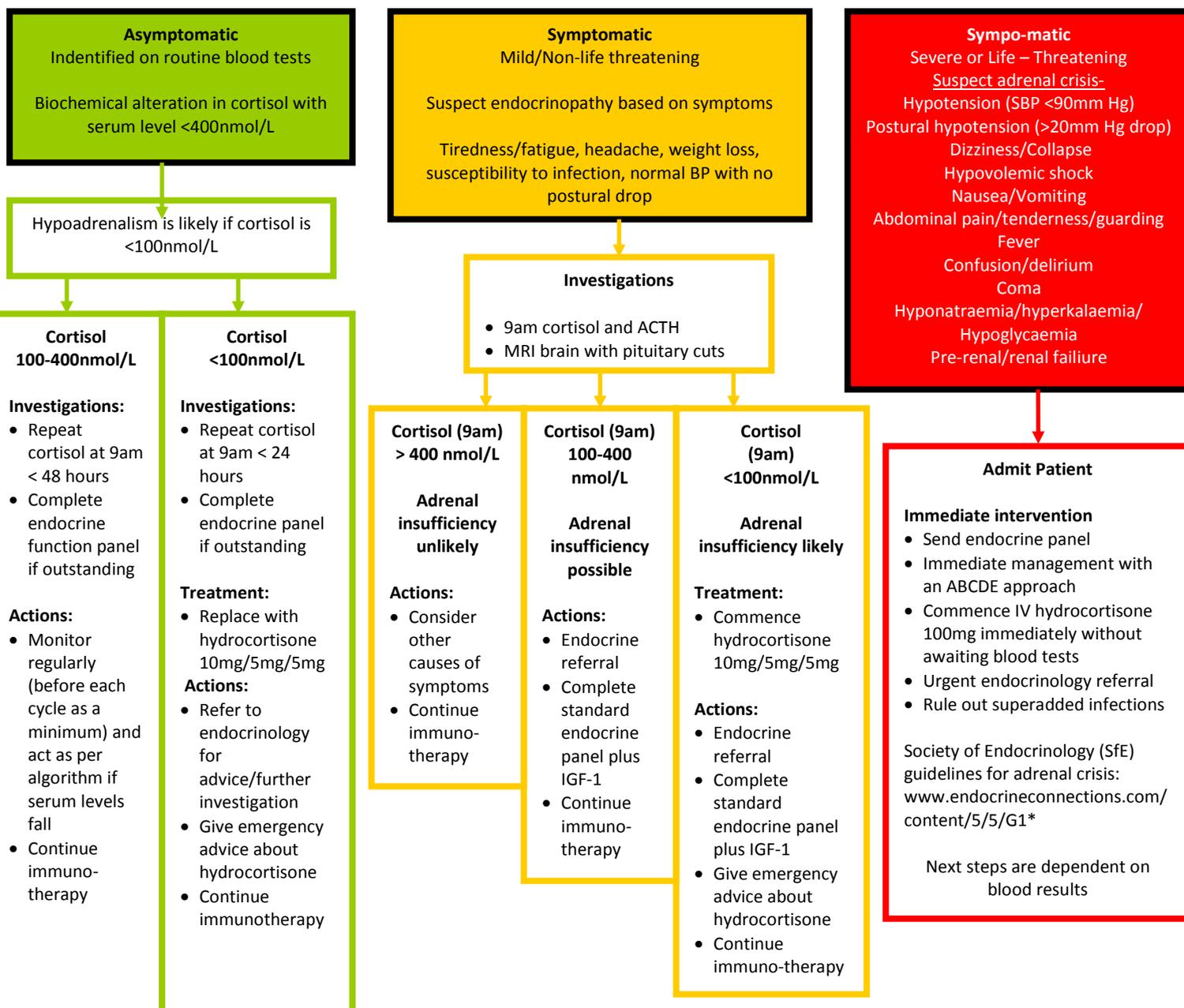
**Immune-Related Adverse Event: Endocrinopathies – Adrenal Crisis**

Immunotherapy has been causatively associated with a number of endocrinopathies that may present with nonspecific symptoms, which may resemble other causes such as brain metastasis or underlying disease.

Endocrine Function Panel:

U&E, LFT, TSH, Free T4, Free T3, ACTH, LH, FSH & Cortisol (between 9-11am if possible), prolactin, blood glucose +/- testosterone/oestrogen

**CAUTION** if the patient is on steroids (prednisolone/dexamethasone) then serum cortisol will likely be suppressed – please discuss with the endocrinology team before commencing replacement



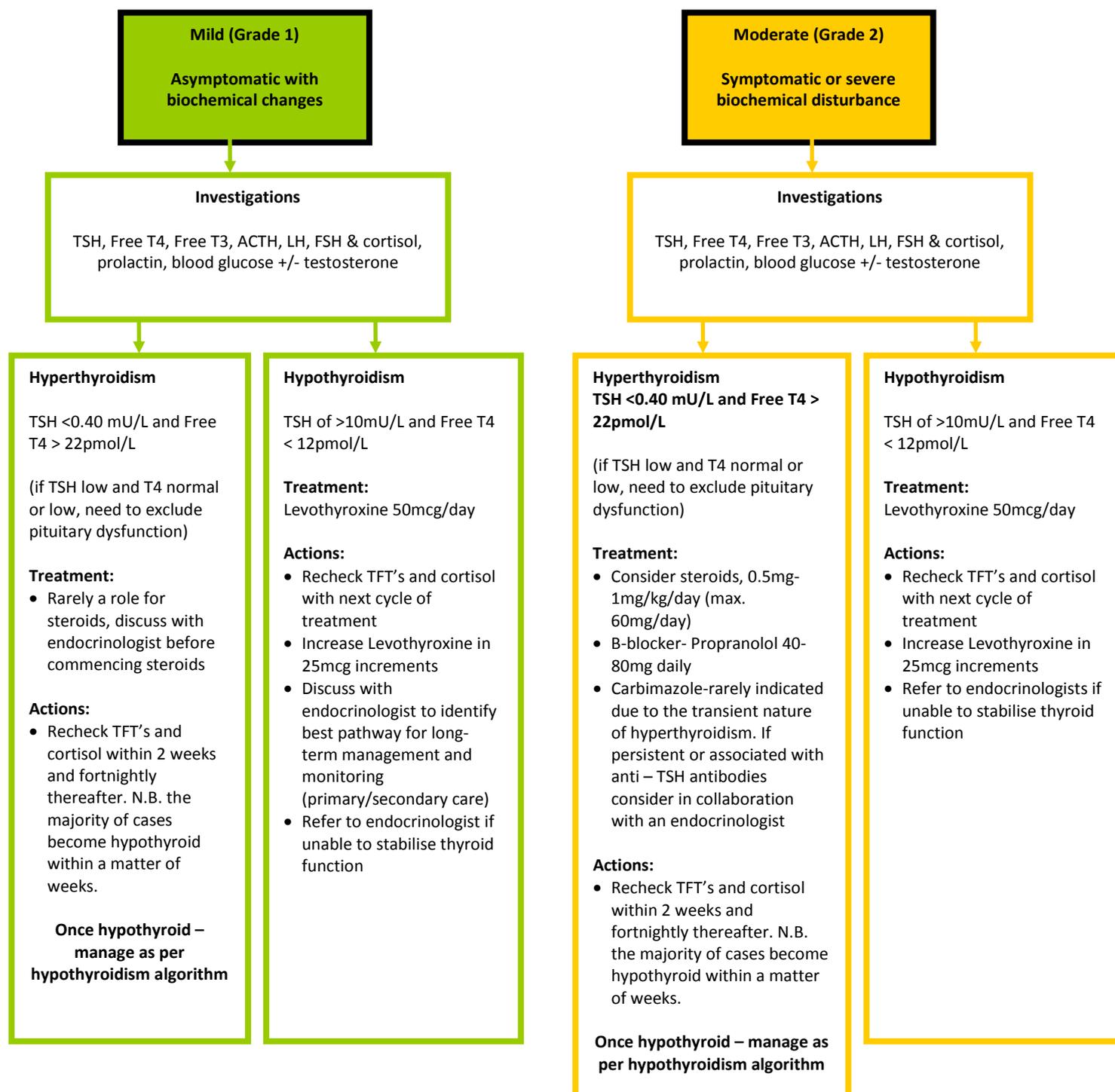
Emergency advice regarding hydrocortisone is outlined in the SfE guidance\*

If thyroid function is also compromised within a hypopituitary picture ensure cortisol is replaced prior to commencement of thyroid replacement (for which grade 1 hypothyroidism guidelines should be instituted)

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**Immune-Related Adverse Event: Endocrinopathies – Thyroid Dysfunction**

Immunotherapy has been causatively associated with a number of endocrinopathies, including hypo/hyperthyroidism. Observational studies have shown that there is a typical pattern of thyroid specific biochemical disturbance presenting with asymptomatic hyperthyroidism, before the return to normal levels for a brief period. This is nearly always followed by the development of, in some cases profound, hypothyroidism which is frequently persistent and requires long term thyroid replacement. Smaller subsets of patients develop isolated hypothyroidism over a period of weeks. Both groups appear to require long term replacement in a majority of cases.

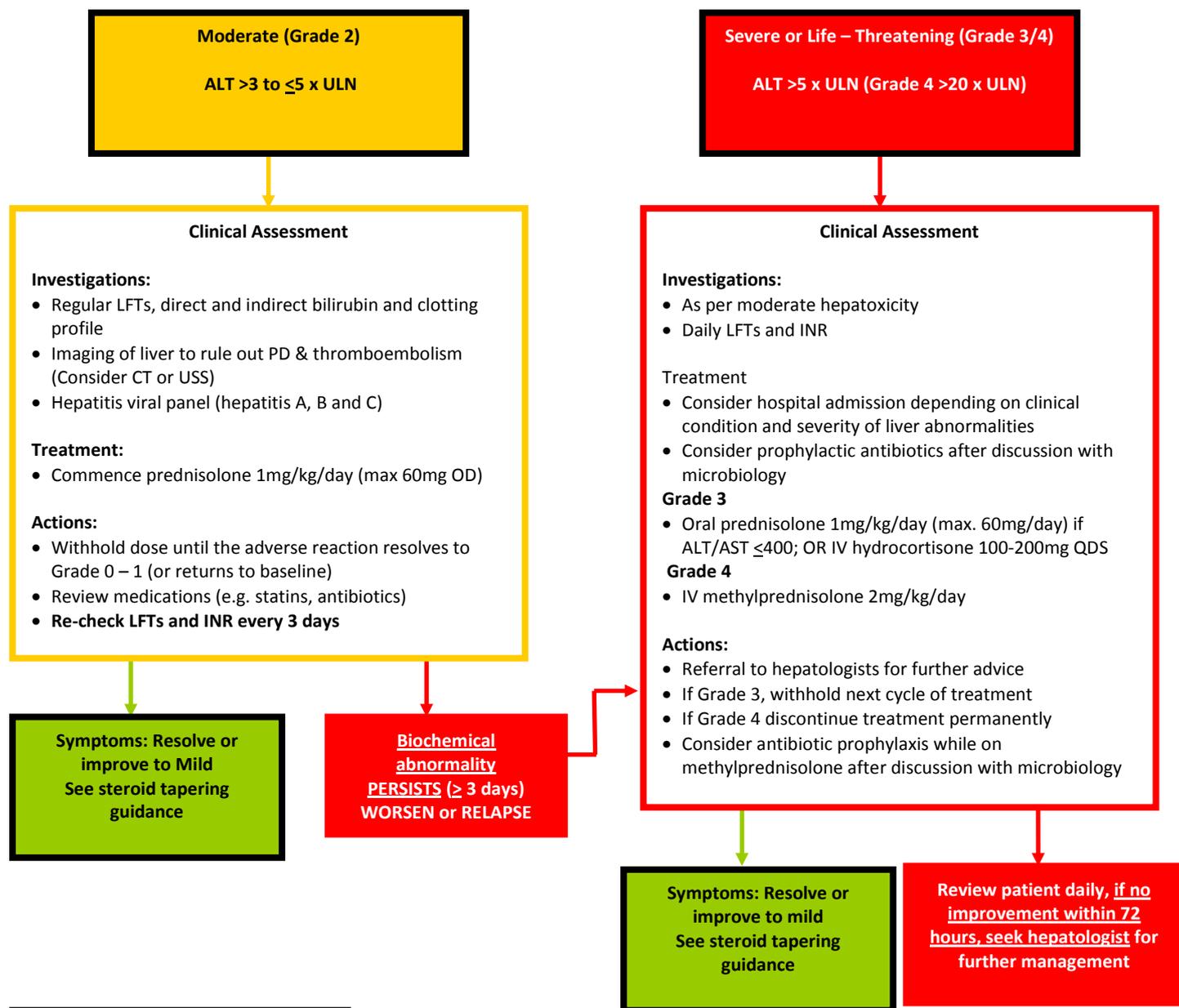


**Interrupt SACT immunotherapy until discussed with Acute Oncology team. Please contact on-call oncology/haematology team for advice. Ensure that Acute Oncology/Haematology team are informed of admission**

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**Immune-Related Adverse Event: Hepatotoxicity**

Hepatic transaminases (ALT/AST) and bilirubin must be evaluated before each dose of immunotherapy, as early laboratory changes indicate emerging immune-related hepatitis. Elevations in LFTs may develop in the absence of clinical symptoms. This guidance should be used in context of baseline LFTs and presence of known liver metastases. No dose adjustment is required for mild hepatic impairment but data is limited for use of these drugs in moderate/severe hepatic impairment and patients should be closely monitored for elevation in LFTs from baseline.

Prior to commencement of immunotherapy all patients should have LFTs checked

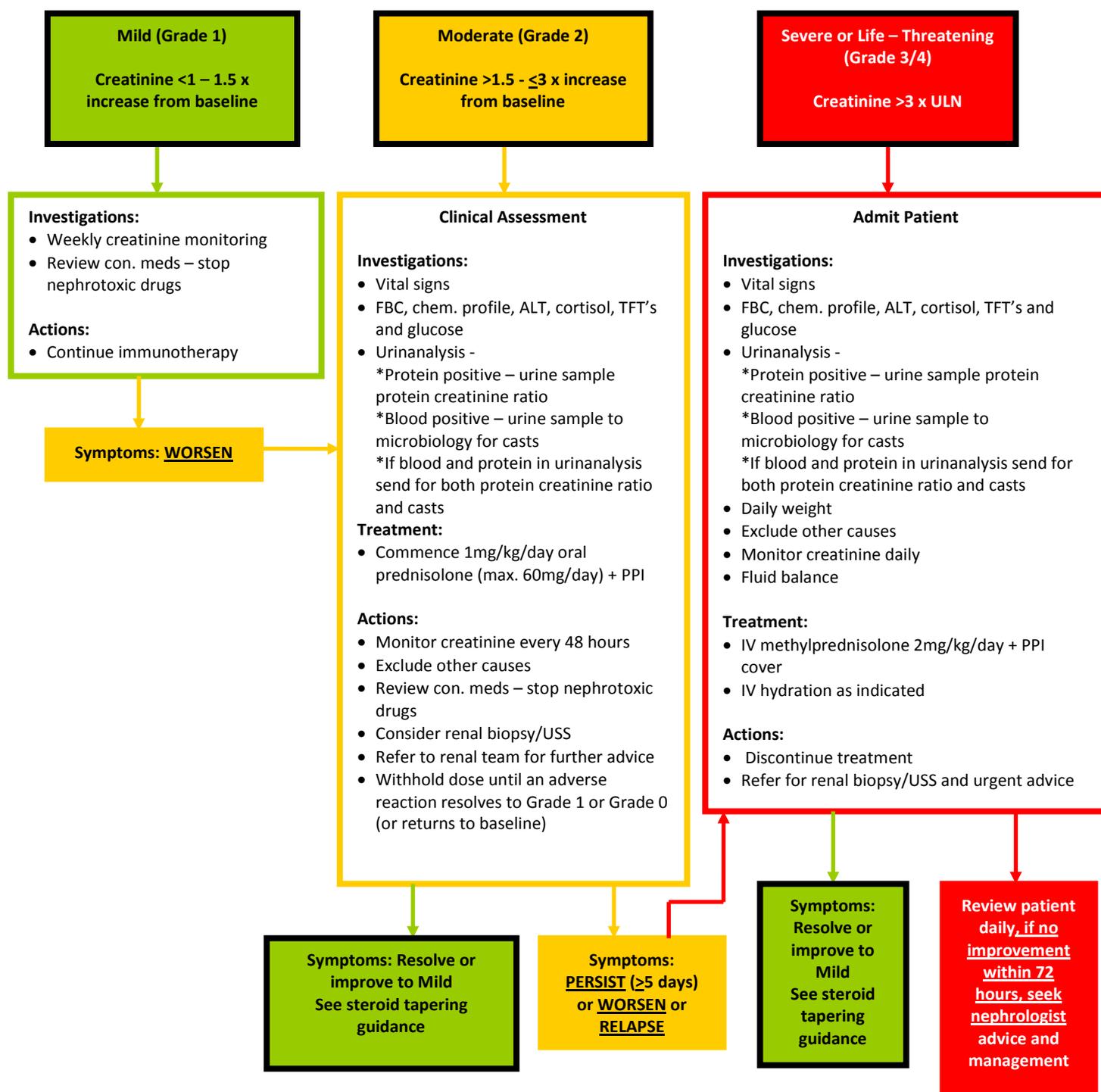


Interrupt SACT immunotherapy until discussed with Acute Oncology team. Please contact on-call oncology/haematology team for advice. Ensure that Acute Oncology/Haematology team are informed of admission

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**Immune-Related Adverse Event: Renal Toxicities**

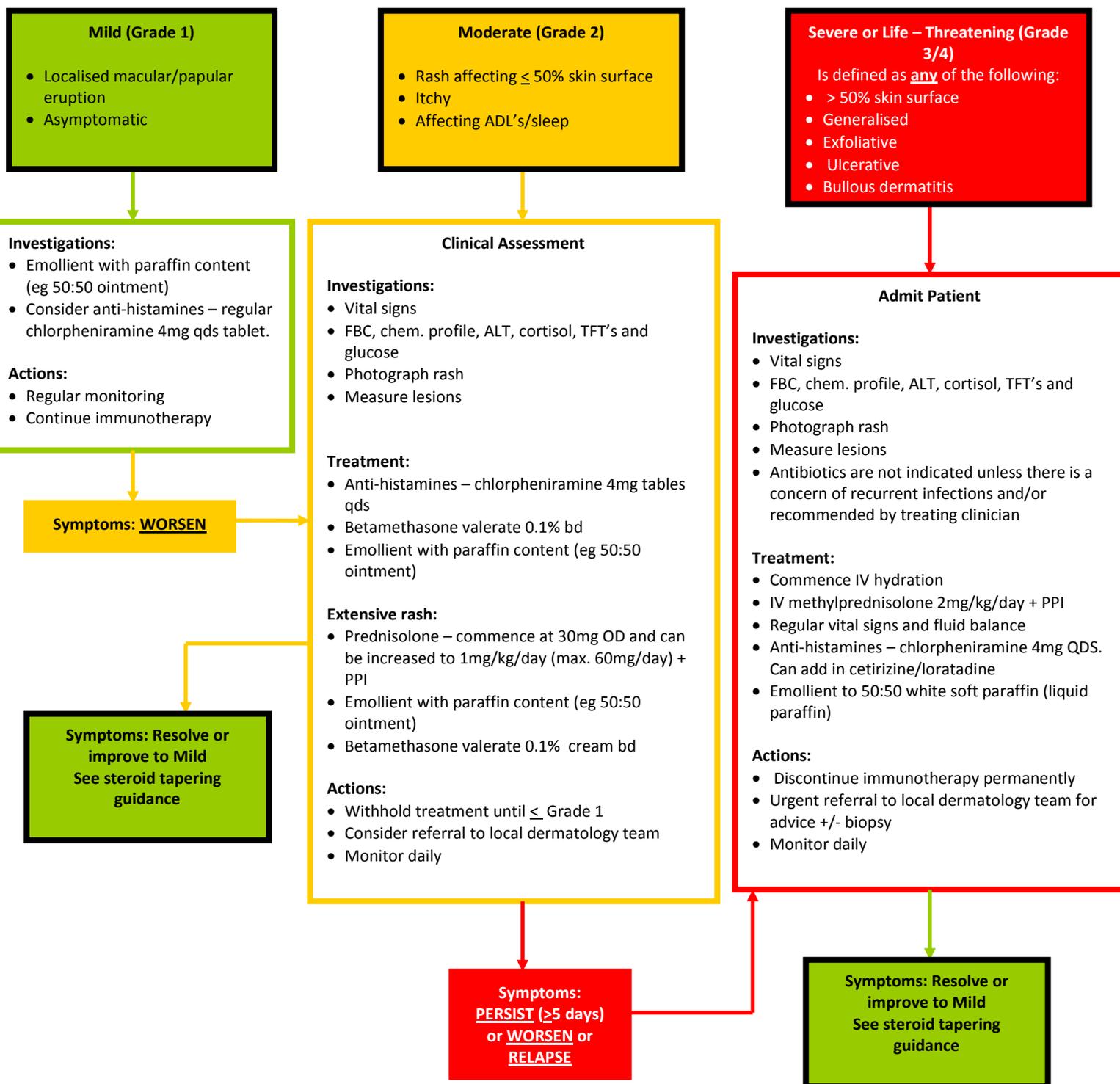
Elevated creatinine and biopsy confirmed tubulointerstitial nephritis and allergic nephritis have been infrequently observed following treatment with immunotherapy agents. The frequency of renal AEs may be greater with combination therapies than with monotherapy. Most cases were Grade 2 or Grade 3 and based on creatinine elevation. Patients with a history of RCC or prior nephrectomy do not appear to be at higher risk. Events were managed with corticosteroids and in all cases renal function partially or fully improved.



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**Immune-Related Adverse Event: Skin Toxicities**

Immunotherapy administration is associated with immune-related adverse events (irAEs) Dermatological irAEs are common and although they are typically mild to moderate in severity, if they are left unrecognised or untreated, they can become life – threatening. These toxicities can be managed effectively in almost all patients by using established guidelines that stress vigilance and the use of corticosteroids and other immunosuppressive agents when necessary.

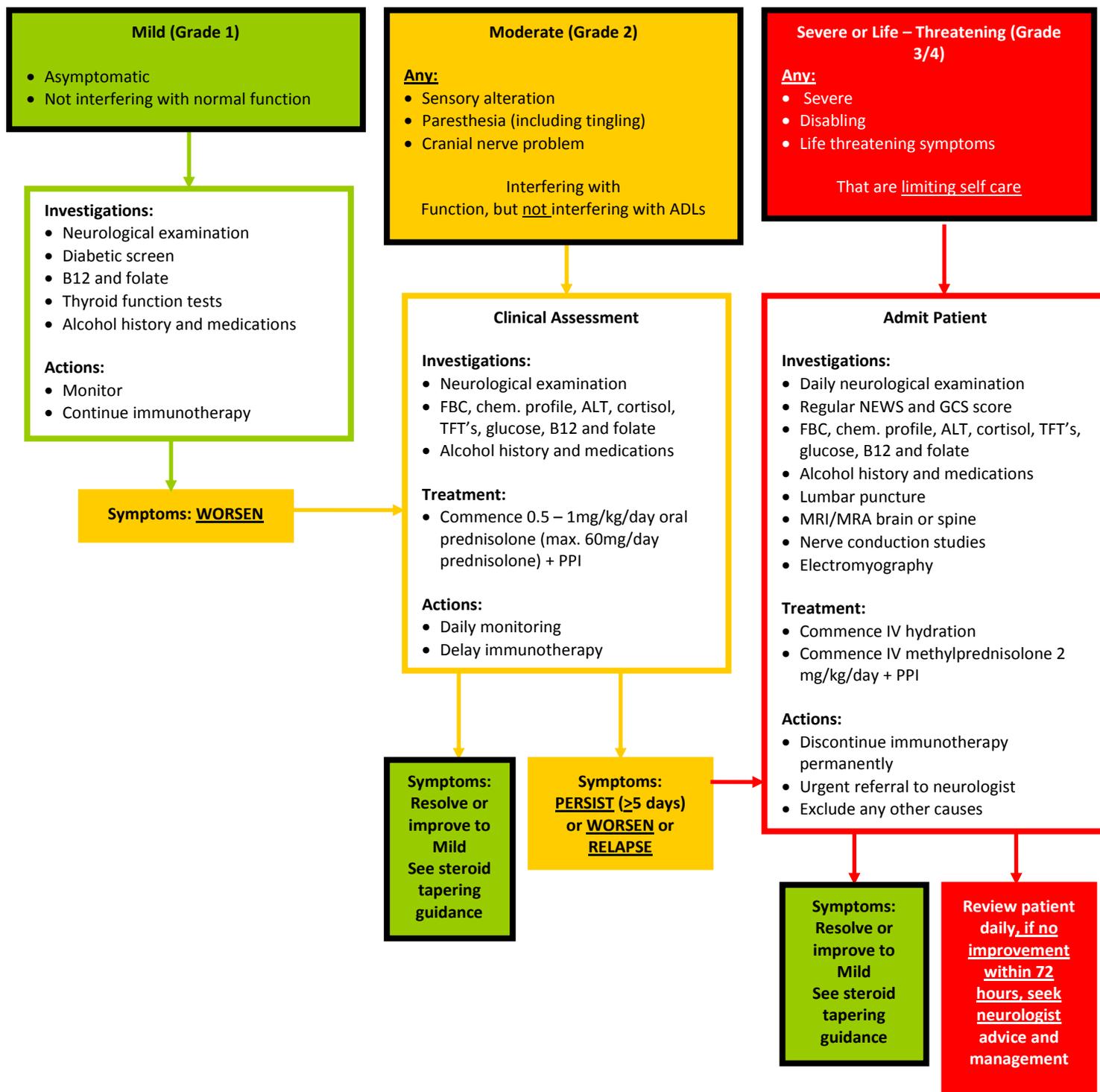


Interrupt SACT immunotherapy until discussed with Acute Oncology team. Please contact **on-call oncology/haematology team** for advice. Ensure that Acute Oncology/Haematology team are informed of admission

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**Immune-Related Adverse Event: Neurological Toxicities**

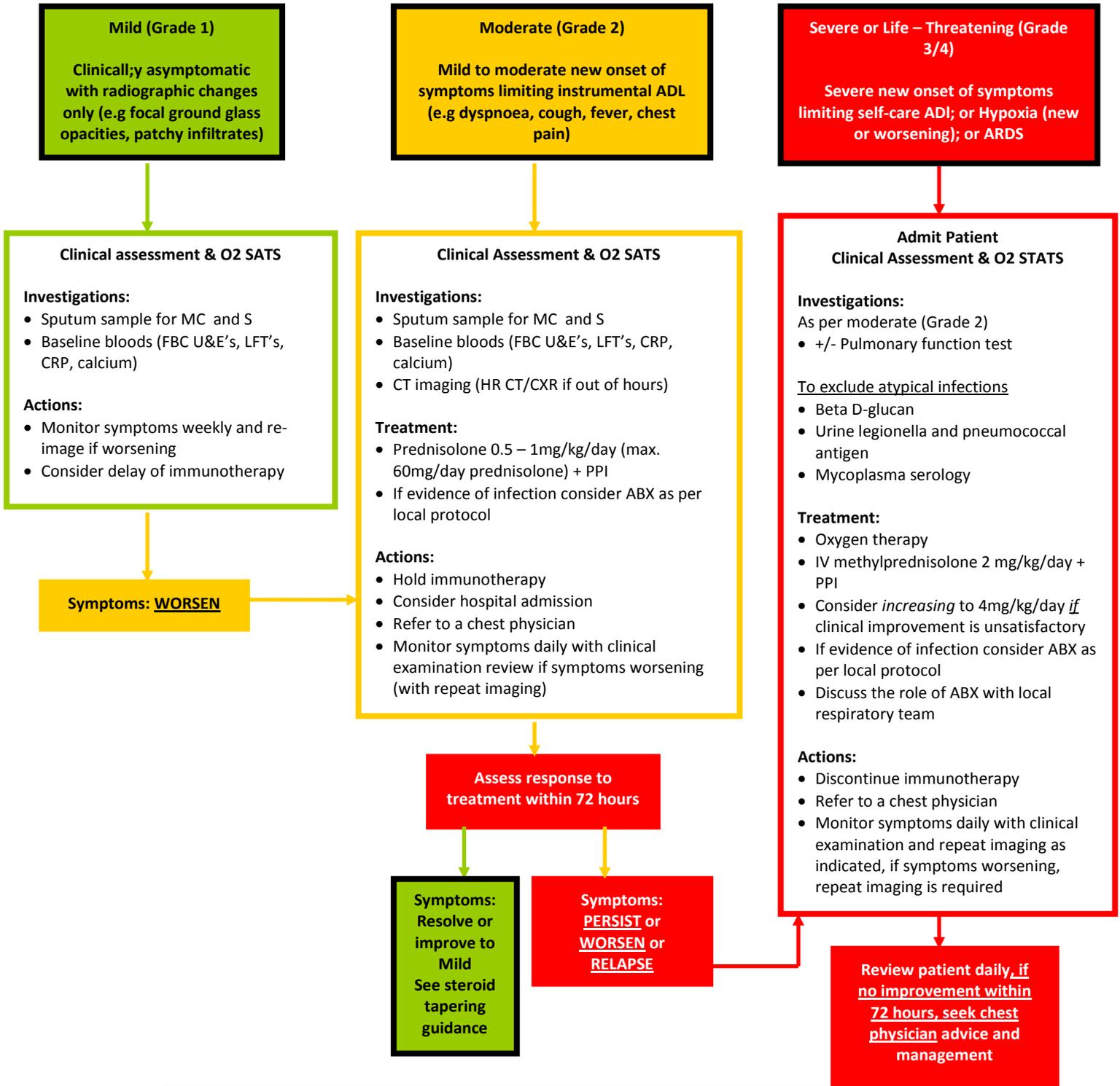
Immunotherapy administration is associated with immune-related adverse events (irAEs) Neurological irAEs can manifest as central abnormalities (eg, aseptic meningitis, encephalitis) or peripheral sensory/motor neuropathies (e.g, Guillain-Barre syndrome) early recognition and treatment of neurologic AEs is critical to its management. As neurologic symptoms can be common in patients with cancer, it is important that an evaluation/work-up distinguish between non-drug-related causes (e.g, progression of disease, concomitant medications, infection) and a possible drug-related AE as the management can be quite different.



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**Immune-Related Adverse Event: Pneumonitis**

Pulmonary irAEs have been observed following treatment with immunotherapy and have occurred after a single dose and after as many as 48 treatments. The frequency of pulmonary AEs may be greater with immunotherapy combination therapies than with monotherapy. The majority of cases reported were Grade 1 or Grade 2 and subjects presented with either asymptomatic radiographic changes (e.g focal ground glass opacities, patchy infiltrates) or with symptoms of dyspnoea, cough or fever. Subjects with reported Grade 3 or Grade 4 pulmonary AEs were noted to have more severe symptoms, more extensive radiographic findings and hypoxia.



Interrupt SACT immunotherapy until discussed with Acute Oncology team. Please contact on-call oncology/haematology team for advice. Ensure that Acute Oncology/Haematology team are informed of admission

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### Steroid tapering Guidance

Many patients will receive moderate – to high-dose steroid therapy for their immune-related toxicity for several weeks. Length of tapering is usually dictated by the severity of the irAE. Regular monitoring during tapering is strongly advised as there is an increased risk of irAE recurrence.

#### Oral steroid tapering:

- Initiate corticosteroid taper over 3-6 weeks

#### Tapering guidance

- Monitor patient by telephone twice weekly during taper.
- Reduce prednisolone dose by 10mg every 3 days (as toxicity allows) until dose is 10mg/day
- Once steroid dose is 10mg/day, reduce by 5mg every 5 days then stop.

#### Intravenous steroid tapering:

- Corticosteroid taper over at least 6 weeks

#### Tapering guidance

- Continue IV methylprednisolone 2mg/kg/day for a total of 5 days then switch to oral prednisolone 1mg/kg/day x 3 days, then reduce to 60mg/day Prednisolone.

#### Upon discharge:

- Monitor patient by telephone twice weekly during taper.
- Reduce prednisolone dose by 10mg every 7 days (as toxicity allows) until dose is 10mg/day
- Once steroid dose is 10mg/day, reduce by 5mg every 7 days then stop.

### Supportive measures:

#### **Hyperglycaemia:**

A baseline HbA1c should be requested at steroid initiation and random afternoon blood sugar monitoring (BM) should be undertaken whilst on treatment. If new hyperglycaemia is detected, Endocrinology advice should be sought (many patients will require short term insulin in this setting) Pre-existing diabetes may require escalation in oral hypoglycaemic agents or insulin.

#### **Insomnia:**

This is the most common steroid-related side effect. Sleep hygiene counselling is important. Patients may require short-term use of zopiclone or benzodiazepines such as temazepam.

#### **Osteoporosis:**

Vitamin D and calcium levels should be taken at baseline and if low, replaced as appropriate. In patients on steroids for >3 months, or with pre-existing osteoporosis, alendronate should be considered.

#### **Infection:**

In patients receiving the equivalent of prednisolone 25mg for  $\geq 6$  weeks we suggest PCP prophylaxis with co-trimoxazole (480mg bd Mon/Wed/Fri)

The oropharynx should be monitored for candidiasis and may require topical therapy such as Nystatin or even oral fluconazole.

If patients are on other immuno-modulatory agents e.g Mycophenolate mofetil, consideration may be given to CMV prophylaxis with valganciclovir, especially if CMV IgG negative and lymphopenic after seeking approval from microbiology.