

Understanding Steroid Creams

Using steroid creams safely

- 1) Different strengths are intended for different body locations – ensure you are using the correct cream prescribed.
- 2) Measure the amount of steroid cream to dispense.

1 Fingertip unit of cream (see below) can cover 2 palm sizes of skin on the same person.



- 3) Apply to affected skin.
- 4) Apply moisturisers 5 to 10 mins after applying steroid cream.
- 5) Avoid applying around the eyes unless specifically instructed by your doctor.

Potency of commonly prescribed steroid creams:

Mild:

- Hydrocortisone 1% cream

Moderate:

- Betamethasone valerate 0.025% cream
- Fluocinolone acetonide 0.0125% cream

Potent:

- Betamethasone valerate 0.1% cream
- Mometasone furoate 0.1% cream

Super Potent:

- Clobetasol propionate 0.05% cream

When can I stop using steroid creams?

- Steroid creams should not be stopped abruptly, as this can cause recurrence of the rash.
- If the skin condition is well controlled, steroids creams can be cut down gradually as directed by the doctor.
- Check with your doctor if you are keen to learn how to cut down on steroid creams.



National University Hospital
5 Lower Kent Ridge Road
Singapore 119074
Tel (65) 67795555
Website: www.nuh.com.sg
Company Registration No. 198500843R

Information is correct at time of printing (September 2018) and subject to revision without prior notice.

The information provided in this publication is meant purely for educational purposes and may not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis or treatment. You should seek the advice of your doctor or a qualified provider before starting any treatment, or if you have any questions related to your health, physical fitness or medical condition.

What are steroid creams?

- Steroid creams, or topical steroids, contain substances similar to the natural steroids our body produces.
- They help to reduce skin inflammation.
- They come in different formulations. Some formulations contain antibiotics meant for broken skin, while others are weaker and intended for sensitive areas like the face. An ointment form of steroids may also be prescribed.

Benefits of steroid creams:

- Reduce skin redness and inflammation.
- Reduced itch may allow better sleep quality and improved attention at school or work.

Risks of not following prescribed course of steroid creams:

- Skin inflammation may worsen.
- Stronger oral medications may be needed to control the disease, such as oral steroids, which have more side effects than steroid creams alone.

Are there any harmful side effects of using steroid creams?

- There may be an increased risk of cataracts and glaucoma if applied to eyes or eyelids.
- Skin thinning and appearance of dilated blood vessels (telangiectasis) can occur with long-term use (multiple years) of strong steroid creams.

Can I use something else besides steroid creams?

- Topical calcineurin inhibitors also help to reduce skin inflammation.
- They may cause a stinging sensation, but do not cause long-term effects like skin thinning or dilated blood vessels.
- They are more expensive and are usually prescribed for sensitive areas like the face and groin.

Common misconceptions:

"I can get addicted to steroid creams once I start using them."

- Use of steroid creams will not lead to addiction.

"Steroids will get absorbed into my blood and affect my body."

- Steroids in steroid creams will not significantly pass into the blood stream, unless a large amount of strong steroids is applied to a large body area for a prolonged period of time.

"Traditional Chinese Medicines (TCMs) and herbal preparations are safer than steroid creams."

- TCM products may also contain steroids or equivalent compounds.