



## GOOD PRACTICE GUIDANCE FOR CARE HOMES – TOPICAL STEROIDS

POTENCY OF PRODUCTS					
MILD	MILD CONTAINS ANTIMICROBIAL	MODERATE	MODERATE CONTAINS ANTIMICROBIAL	POTENT	VERY POTENT
Hydrocortisone 0.5% - 2.5% Eurax Hydrocortisone	Daktacort Timodine	Eumovate ( <u>Clobetasone</u> 0.05%) Betnovate RD	Trimovate	Betnovate Synalar	Dermovate ( <u>Clobetasol</u> 0.05%)

- Be aware of potency of each steroid product. More potent steroids have more side effects.
- Used intermittently (maximum 7 to 14 days depending on preparation) for acute flare ups of inflammatory skin problems like eczema when an emollient alone is not enough
- Inappropriate use of steroid creams/ointments can cause thinning of the skin and can even be absorbed into the body where it can cause side effects
- Products which contain antimicrobials should be used regularly for a short period (twice daily for 1 week). Longer use increases the chance of resistance and sensitisation
- Seek review for any resident on a long term steroid cream/ointment.
- Review of treatment is required as condition improves and especially if no improvement

### HOW MUCH TOPICAL STEROID TREATMENT FOR ADULTS

It is important to get the dose right when using topical steroids. A standard measure is used called a **Finger Tip Unit (FTU)**. It is the amount squeezed from a tube along an adult's fingertip, from the end of the finger to the first crease.

AREA OF SKIN TO BE TREATED	QUANTITY OF STEROID CREAM/OINTMENT TO BE USED FOR ADULTS (FTU) 2FTU = 1GRAM
Face and Neck	2.5
Both sides of one hand	1
One Arm	3
One Foot	2
One Leg	6
Chest and Abdomen	7
Back and Buttocks	7

### How to use creams and ointments

1. Wash your hands and put on a pair of disposable gloves
2. Once the seal is opened write the date on the tube/jar
3. Make sure the area is clean and free from moisture
4. Measure the appropriate number of fingertip units (FTU) for the area to be covered if using a steroid cream
5. Steroid creams and ointments need to be applied thinly to the skin
6. Apply the cream or ointment to the skin and gently rub in
7. Remove gloves and wash your hands
8. If more than one cream/ointment is to be applied, leave at least 15 minutes between applications. There are no standard rules which has to be applied first
9. Record each application in the resident's administration records

### Questions to ask the prescriber

(Record this information in the Care Plan)

- How long has the preparation to be used for?
- Where is it to be applied?
- Do any previous creams or ointments need stopping?
- Will the patient need reviewing after stopping the preparation?

### References:

BNF September 2017 pharmaceutical press  
[www.eczema.org/documents/153/factsheettopicalsteroids](http://www.eczema.org/documents/153/factsheettopicalsteroids)- accessed 30<sup>th</sup> April 2013  
 South Gloucestershire PCT – From the administration of medication for older people – accessed 25<sup>th</sup> March 2013  
[www.patient.co.uk/health/finger-tip-units-for-topical-steroids](http://www.patient.co.uk/health/finger-tip-units-for-topical-steroids) - accessed June 2014  
 East Lancashire Joint Formulary [www.elmmb.nhs.uk](http://www.elmmb.nhs.uk)

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