

Topical steroids



Information for patients

Dermatology



PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



What are topical steroids?

Steroids are a group of drugs used to reduce inflammation. The topical steroids we use in dermatology come in a cream, ointment or lotion that can be applied to the skin.

How will using topical steroid cream help me?

Topical steroids will help to make your skin condition less red, hot and itchy.

We use a variety of strengths of steroid to treat skin conditions ranging from very potent to mild. What strength you need depends on what part of your body is affected and how severe the condition is.

Potencies

Very potent

- Dermovate ointment/cream

Potent

- Betnovate ointment/cream
- Cutivate ointment/cream
- Elocon ointment/cream

Moderately potent

- Eumovate ointment/cream
- Betnovate 1:4 ointment/cream

Mild

- Hydrocortisone ointment/cream

Are topical steroids safe?

The use of an appropriate topical steroid is a safe and essential part of treatment if used correctly. In some cases there may be some side effects. This depends on the strength and how long it is used for.

What are the side effects?

Most of the steroid creams and lotions used in dermatology are rarely associated with side effects. However, the potent and very potent creams (see above) can result in side effects if used for a long time. The side effects you may experience include:

- Skin striae (stretch marks)
- Atrophy of the skin (thinning or depression of skin)
- Telangiectasia (red lesions caused by the dilation of blood vessels)

Nevertheless, under medical supervision and if applied correctly these side effects should pose no greater risk than many other drugs.

How do I apply my topical steroid?

To get the best results from your topical steroid treatment you should:

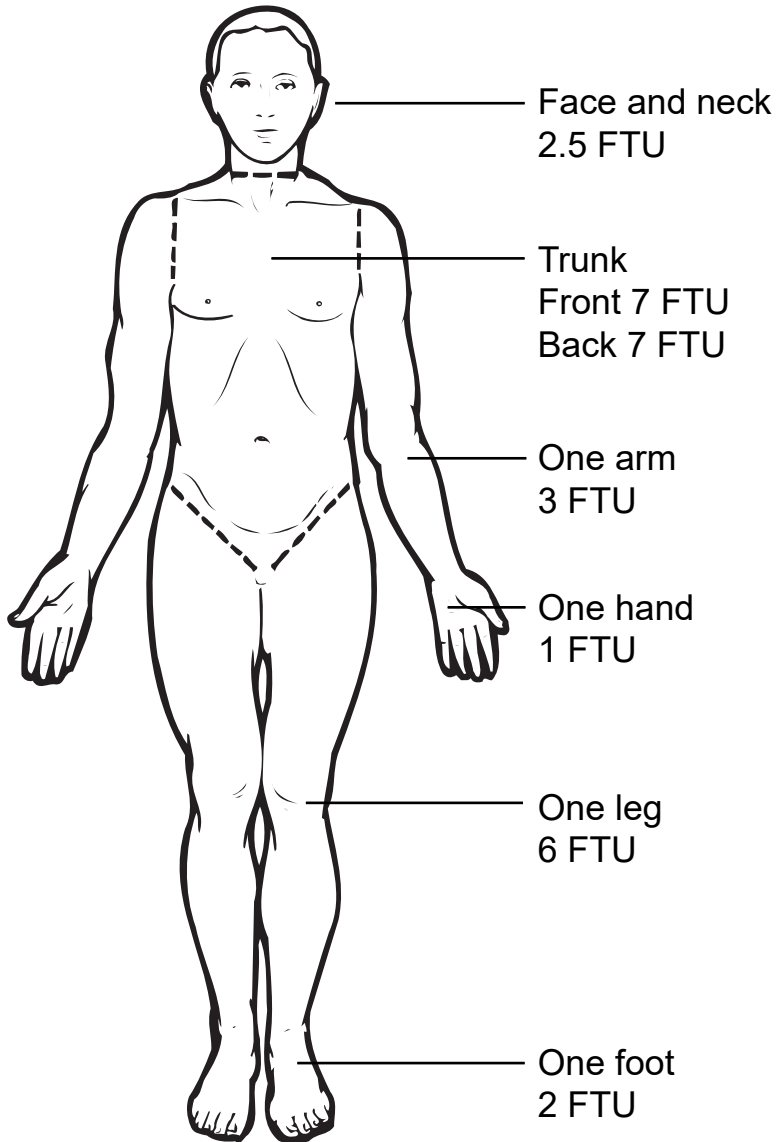
- Apply as prescribed to the inflamed areas of skin
- Do not apply the steroid at the same time as your emollient
- If a topical steroid has been prescribed for your scalp, follow the instructions for use carefully
- Apply the steroid in the direction of the hair as it lies on the skin

How much should I apply?

Use only the amount prescribed by your doctor. These will be given in either grams or Finger Tip Units (FTUs).

For help with this please use the following diagrams.





Handy tips

- Start with the right amount of steroid
- Apply as prescribed, never treat more frequently, you may do more harm than good
- Use your emollients between topical steroid treatments
- Do not keep old tubes of cream



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