

Prescribing and applying topical steroids

What topical steroid formulations are available?

Strength	Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient	Brand names
Mild	Hydrocortisone 1%	Hydrocortisone 1% cream (15g)
Moderate	Betamethasone valerate 0.025%	Betnovate RD [®] cream or ointment (100g)
	Clobetasone butyrate 0.05%	Eumovate [®] cream or ointment (30g)
Strong	Betamethasone valerate 0.1%	Betnovate [®] cream or ointment (30g or 100g) Betnovate Scalp Application [®] (30ml or 100ml)
	Hydrocortisone butyrate 0.1%	Locoid [®] cream (30g or 100g)
	Mometasone furoate 0.1%	Elocon [®] cream or ointment (30g) Elocon Scalp Application [®] (30ml)
Very strong	Clobetasol propionate 0.1%	Dermovate [®] cream or ointment (30g or 100g) Dermovate Scalp Application [®] (50ml)

How much topical steroid should be applied?

The fingertip unit (FTU) is used as a guide to estimate how much topical steroid should be used to treat a given body site.



One fingertip unit is defined as the amount of steroid squeezed from a standard tube along an adult's fingertip (i.e. from the very end of the finger to the first crease of the finger).

The below tables assume the whole area is treated. If this is not the case, then the number of FTUs should be adjusted accordingly.

Fingertip units for children are measured on an adult finger and are used differently according to the age of the child, as per the below table:

If you are concerned, please contact the Emergency Department you first attended:

Mercy University
 Hospital
 (021) 4271971

M-UCC
 (St. Mary's
 Health
 Campus)
 (021) 4926900

CUH
 (021) 4920200

Local Injury Unit
 Mallow General
 Hospital
 (022) 58506

Local Injury Unit
 Bantry General
 Hospital
 (027) 52900



Number of fingertip units (FTUs) to treat adults		Number of fingertip units (FTUs) to treat children					
Site	Number of FTUs	Age	Entire face and neck	Entire arm and hand	Entire leg and foot	Entire front of chest and abdomen	Entire back including buttocks
Scalp	3	3-12 months	1	1	1.5	1	1.5
Face and neck	2.5	1-2 years	1.5	1.5	2	2	3
Front and back of one hand	1	3-5 years	1.5	2	3	3	3.5
One arm and hand	4	6-10 years	2	2.5	4.5	3.5	5
One leg and entire foot	8						
Trunk front	8						
Trunk back	8						

Should topical steroids be applied with moisturisers?

Moisturisers should not be applied at the same time as a topical steroid as they will dilute the strength of the steroid. When both a moisturiser and a topical steroid are to be used, the moisturiser should be applied 30 minutes before application of the topical steroid to enhance absorption.

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Approved By: Drugs and Therapeutics Committee; XXXXXXXX

References: Topical Steroids St John's Institute of Dermatology, HPRA

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