

Review of Repeat Prescribing of Topical Corticosteroids

Summary

To Review the Repeat Prescribing of Topical Corticosteroids in General Practice to ensure appropriate and safe prescribing.

Aim/Purpose/Background

- Topical corticosteroids are used for the treatment of inflammatory conditions of the skin (other than those arising from an infection), in particular eczema (BNF section 13.5.1), contact dermatitis, insect stings, and eczema of scabies (BNF section 13.10.4). Corticosteroids suppress the inflammatory reaction during use; they are not curative and on discontinuation a rebound exacerbation of the condition may occur. They are generally used to relieve symptoms and suppress signs of the disorder when other measures such as emollients are ineffective.
- The British National Formulary (BNF) states that "corticosteroid preparations should normally be applied once or twice daily. It is not necessary to apply them more frequently".
- It is recommended that where more than one alternative topical corticosteroid is considered clinically appropriate within a potency class, the drug with the lowest acquisition cost should be prescribed, taking into account pack size and frequency of application
- Guidelines from the British Association of Dermatologists suggest that the best way of using topical corticosteroids is probably twice daily for 10–14 days when the eczema is active, followed by a 'holiday period' of emollients only.
- Topical corticosteroids are categorised as mild, moderately potent, potent or very potent corticosteroids. The least potent preparation which is effective should be chosen but dilution should be avoided whenever possible.
- Potency of a topical corticosteroid preparation is a result of the formulation as well as the corticosteroid. Therefore, proprietary names are shown below.

Mild	Hydrocortisone 0.1–2.5%, Dioderm, Mildison, Synalar 1 in 10 dilution
Mild with antimicrobials	Canesten HC, Daktacort, Econacort, Fucidin H, Nystaform-HC, Terra-Cortril, Timodine
Moderate	Betnovate-RD, Eumovate, Haelan, Modrasone, Synalar 1 in 4 Dilution, Ultralanum Plain
Moderate with antimicrobials	Trimovate
Moderate with urea	Alphaderm
Potent	Beclometasone dipropionate 0.025%, Betamethasone valerate 0.1%, Betacap, Betesil, Bettamousse, Betnovate, Cutivate, Diprosone, Elocon, Hydrocortisone butyrate, Locoid, Locoid Crelo, Metosyn, Mometasone furoate 0.1%, Nerisone, Synalar
Potent with antimicrobials	Aureocort, Betamethasone and clioquinol, Betamethasone and neomycin, Fucibet, Lotriderm, Synalar C, Synalar N
Potent with salicylic acid	Diprosalic



Very potent	Clarelux, Dermovate, Etrivex, Nerisone Forte
Very potent with antimicrobials	Clobetasol with neomycin and nystatin

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Formulary Choices

Mild	Hydrocortisone 0.5% - 1% cream or ointment
Moderate	Betamethasone 0.025% 1 in 4 cream or ointment, Clobetasone 0.05%
Potent	Betamethasone 0.1%, Fluocinolone 0.0255, Diprosalic, Hydrocortisone Butyrate 0.01% cream or ointment
Very Potent	Clobetasol 0.0%

Suitable quantities of corticosteroid preparations to be prescribed for specific areas of the body

These amounts are usually suitable for an adult for single daily applications for 2 weeks

Area of the Body	Creams and Ointments
Face and Neck	15 to 30g
Both Hands	15 to 30g
Scalp	15 to 30g
Both Arms	30 to 60g
Both Legs	100g
Trunk	100g
Groins and Genitalia	15 to 30g

This is a quality and safety project that will potentially release some financial savings

Guidance for Action

- Obtain GP Agreement for project
- Undertake a search of topical corticosteroids on repeat prescription.
- Review indication for treatment with topical corticosteroid
- Review quantity and frequency issued
- Check dosage instructions are appropriate
- Review preparation to assess formulary compliance.

Action

- Remove from repeat if no issue has been made in the last 6 months
- If issue frequency is excessive adjust the default interval or reduce quantity
- Review dosage instructions if 'as directed' consulting GP if necessary
- Consider moving medication to acute
- Make patient information leaflets available to patients and prescription clerks
http://www.netdoctor.co.uk/health_advice/facts/corticosteroidcream.htm

[http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Corticosteroid-preparations-\(topical\)/Pages/dosage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Corticosteroid-preparations-(topical)/Pages/dosage.aspx)

