



The Ins and Outs of Topical Steroid Creams for Eczema

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Prescription Steroid Cream for Eczema

Have you or your child ever had a bad eczema flare-up? You know, the flare-up that starts so innocently, and then takes over the entire body? If so, you know how scary and ugly it can be. Your doctor may have prescribed a steroid cream. You may have lingering questions about prescription steroid cream for eczema.

If you have never used prescription steroid cream for eczema before, you may have some questions. Is this eczema treatment safe? What should you expect? Read on to learn more about this topical eczema treatment option.

What is Prescription Steroid Cream for Eczema?

A topical steroid cream is a medicinal cream that you apply onto your skin to treat eczema flare-ups.

Your skin acts as a barrier that prevents germs and other harmful substances from entering your body. When you have eczema, your skin barrier gets damaged and may become inflamed and itchy. This is where topical steroids come to the rescue because they reduce inflammation and itchiness so that your skin barrier can heal.

A doctor can give you a prescription steroid cream for eczema if your symptoms become too difficult to deal with.

You can also use moisturizer to help deal with mild eczema flare-ups. However, for moderate to severe eczema, you will want to add a prescription steroid cream to your daily regimen. Topical steroids have been used for over 60 years to treat eczema flare-ups.

Side Effects of Prescription Steroid Cream for Eczema

You may have heard some horror stories about the side effects of prescription steroid cream for eczema. This might make you wonder whether they are safe to use. They are usually safe if you don't use them too long, too often or at too high of a dose. Make sure to always follow treatment instructions from your doctor.

Common side effects of topical prescription steroid creams include:

- Thinner skin.
- Stretch marks (striae).
- Dilation of the blood vessels, which look like spider webs on the skin (telangiectasias).
- Darkening of the skin.
- Hair growth on the skin.

Some of these side effects, such as thinner skin, will reverse once you stop using the steroid creams. On the other hand, stretch marks, darkening of the skin and telangiectasias may be permanent.

Rarer but more serious side effects include:

- Acne.
- High blood pressure.
- Suppression of the adrenal glands.
- Cataracts.
- Glaucoma.
- Thinning of the bones.
- Stunting of growth in children.
- High blood sugar.
- Steroid withdrawal.

What to Expect From Topical Steroid Cream

Prescription steroid cream for eczema usually takes a few days to start working. Your flare-up may subside after only a few days of use, but some cases can take up to six weeks. Everyone is different, and each case of eczema, as well as treatment plans, are unique.

How long it takes to work depends on how strong the prescription steroid cream is, and the area of your body that is being treated.

Some prescription steroid creams are stronger than others. Steroid creams are divided into seven groups ranging from mild creams (such as hydrocortisone) to very potent or super potent creams (such as clobetasol propionate). Very potent or super potent creams can be up to 600 times as strong as hydrocortisone, so be sure to follow your doctor's instructions when using these.

What to Avoid When Using Prescription Steroid Cream for Eczema

Before you start using a prescription topical cream for eczema, here are some don'ts to keep in mind.

Using Too Little

If you are worried about the side effects of steroid cream, you may make the mistake of applying too little. This might result in improper use of the medication, which will cause it to be ineffective.

Don't be afraid of using the steroid cream. These are not the same steroids that some athletes abuse. What's more, by applying too little of the steroid, you or your child's eczema flare-up will not completely clear up. In turn, you will have to apply the steroid cream for a longer period and will end up using more than you would if you had applied it properly the first time.

Using Too Much

On the other hand, you may be one of those people who decides to use steroid cream every day once the eczema clears up to prevent further flare-ups. Don't! By applying steroid cream long-term, you or your child are more likely to develop side effects.

Stopping Treatment Too Soon

Once you or your child's eczema starts to clear up, it may be tempting to stop using the steroid cream. However, you need to fight this temptation. Wait until your skin is no longer itchy and inflamed before you stop treatment. If you stop treating the eczema too soon, the eczema rash may return.

Not Applying Moisturizer With Steroid Cream

When I first started treating my daughter's bad eczema flare-up with a stronger steroid cream, I assumed I did

not need moisturizers. I made this assumption as the moisturizer clearly had not worked in her eczema progression.

Don't make this rookie mistake! You still need the moisturizer, as it helps relieve the dryness and irritation.

Should you apply the moisturizer before or after the steroid cream? It doesn't matter what order you apply the moisturizer and steroid cream. The important thing is to wait 15 minutes between applying the moisturizer and applying the steroid cream. This ensures that the steroid cream is well-absorbed.

Using Prescription Steroid Creams While Pregnant

It is safe to use a mild or moderate potency prescription steroid cream when you are pregnant. However, if you use high potency or ultra high potency prescription steroid creams, particularly in larger amounts, your baby may weigh less.

Be sure to always check with your doctor before using prescription medications, and follow treatment plans as directed.