



You have been prescribed a steroid ointment to use on your vulvar skin. **These are usually prescribed to reduce itchiness, pain, and inflammation.** In some skin conditions, it can also be important to use them **even when you feel totally normal** to reduce the risk of scarring and skin cancer. It is very important to use the steroids as prescribed.

Steroids for the skin come in different strengths. Your doctor has selected the strength that has been shown to work well for you and your skin condition.

An ointment is usually preferred to a cream because it is less easily wiped off and does not contain alcohol that can be irritating to the vulva especially if there are cuts or inflammation on the skin.

Use of Topical Steroids

How?

- You should apply them directly with your finger to the skin and rub it in.
- It can be helpful if you look at the skin with a mirror when you are applying the steroids.
- Check with your doctor if you require further information on how to apply the steroids.

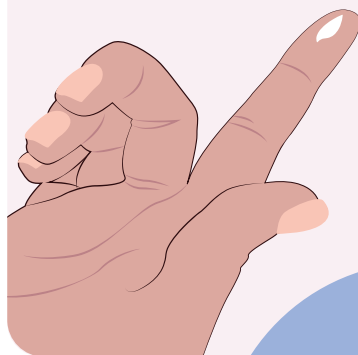
How Often?

- Some conditions benefit from long term use of topical steroids (on a daily or weekly basis) to prevent symptoms and further skin damage, while others only need short term use.
- Usually steroids are best applied at night before you go to sleep.
- Check with your doctor how often you should be using steroids.

How Much?

- The vulva needs between 0.5-1 finger-tip unit (approximately 0.25g-0.5g) to cover its whole surface.

0.5 fingertip



1 fingertip



Safety of Topical Steroids

People are often worried about side effects of using steroids on the skin, but when they are used and monitored appropriately (as described previously), **the risk of these effects is very low**. Using steroids on the skin is **not the same** as taking them by mouth. Generally, the vulva is “steroid resistant” meaning that the harm associated with undertreated skin conditions outweighs the risk of adverse events.

Skin-specific side effects include skin thinning, stretch marks and redness, but these happen with using too much for a long time.

Whole-body effects include suppressing the body’s natural immune system and stress response, but the studies that showed this link were for people who were using 100g of ultra-potent steroid every week for 1.5 years.

You have been prescribed a tube of 30-50g to use over the course of 6 months to a year, which is much less.



When to Seek Help

- **Worse pain, itchiness or irritation** with the use of the steroid
- Needing **more and more** steroid to help relieve discomfort
- **Cuts that don’t heal** with steroids
- Sore hard areas that **aren’t improving** with steroid use