

Instructions for the Use of Topical Hydrocortisone 1% Cream or Ointment

This information is for patients who need to use Hydrocortisone 1% ointment/cream. It explains what Hydrocortisone 1% ointment/cream is and how to apply it. It also tells you about the possible side effects.

What is Hydrocortisone cream/ointment?

It is a mild steroid, which is applied to the wound. It is normally used to treat inflammatory disorders of the skin and allergic reactions. However, in your case it is being used to control over-granulation in your wound. This is where the bottom layer of the skin heals at a faster rate than the top layer of skin. If you apply hydrocortisone 1% to the wound it flattens the lower layer enabling the top layer of skin to grow and the wound to heal. The cream is white and the ointment is a light amber colour. Both the ointment and the cream contain 1% hydrocortisone in a base of white soft paraffin. You will be given/prescribed either the ointment or the cream, but not both.

Taking an unlicensed medicine

It is not a licensed product for use in over-granulating wounds which means it is not specifically designed and tested for the use in this situation. However, experience in wound care has provided evidence that it can help to control over-granulation. It is accepted practice in treating over-granulation.

How do I take the medicine?

The ointment/cream should be applied to the areas identified by the nurse in the Plastic Dressing Clinic. It is applied to all the raw, raised, red, lumpy areas in the wound.

1. Wash the affected area under running water or in the shower. Dry thoroughly with a clean paper towel.
2. Apply a thin layer of ointment/cream over the affected area, avoiding healthy surrounding skin or healed areas.
3. A non-adherent dressing needs to be applied over the wound to keep the ointment/cream in place. Your nurse will advise you which one to use. These are normally Jelonet, N/A Ultra or Silflex. A dry dressing will then be placed over everything to secure it.

4. Whichever ointment/cream has been prescribed and the assessment of your wound will determine how often the dressing needs to be changed, this will be: (please tick)

- Daily
- Alternate days
- Three times a week
- Twice a week
- Weekly

Do not use a film dressing as this will make the wound too moist.

What should I do if I forget to use the medicine?

If you realise you have forgotten to change the dressing at the specified time you can just change it and apply the hydrocortisone when you remember.

Are there any side effects?

The short duration of time for which we use topical steroid treatment means there is very little chance of experiencing long time side effects. However, potential side effects may include:

- Allergic reaction to the ointment/cream including redness/itching/swelling/rash. Treatment should be stopped immediately if this occurs.
- The wound getting larger. If this occurs, again stop the treatment and contact the Plastic Dressing Clinic.
- Prolonged use can result in thinning of the skin, widening of the blood vessels and stretch marks.
- The wound could become infected. Look for signs of infection (redness, heat, swelling and increasing pain). Hydrocortisone must not be used on the area if you think it is infected. You need to seek immediate attention from the dressing clinic between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Outside of these hours you should attend the local Accident & Emergency Department. Make sure you also arrange to be seen at the Plastic Dressing Clinic at the earliest possible time.

Is there anything else I need to know?

1. If you react to the dressing you should stop using it. Signs of a reaction include itching and redness.

2. You should watch the wound for any signs of infection. This includes redness, heat, swelling and increasing pain.
3. If the wound starts to get worse or you have concerns, you must contact the Plastic Dressing Clinic to discuss and arrange another appointment if necessary.

How do I get a repeat prescription?

The nurse applying the above dressing will arrange a review in the Plastic Dressing Clinic between one to two weeks after starting the treatment. The need for a repeat prescription will depend on the progress of the wound.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns please contact the Plastic Dressing Clinic nurses on 020 8725 0473 or the lead clinical nurse in plastic surgery on 020 8672 1071, ask for bleep 6332 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all of our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: PLS_IFTH_02 **Published:** February 2020 **Review date:** February 2022