



Topical Treatments for Atopic Dermatitis

About this chart: Atopic dermatitis, a common form of eczema, can be a challenging condition to manage. This chart was created by the Eczema Society of Canada, in consultation with Canadian dermatologists, paediatricians, and a pharmacist with the intention of providing information to health care providers. This chart is for general information purposes and product monographs should be consulted.

Topical Corticosteroids

Topical corticosteroids (TCS) are the first line treatment for atopic dermatitis. A variety of factors should be considered when prescribing TCS, including disease severity, xerosis, patient age, body areas to be treated, patient preference, and cost. TCS should be used with caution around the eyes due to potential adverse effects. Monitoring for adverse effects is necessary. The product monograph should be consulted for full information. Counsel patients on safe use.

TCS are typically applied once or twice daily, depending on the product and the body area to be treated.

Drug	TCS Potency	Use/Comments
Desonide 0.05% <i>(generics available - cream, lotion)</i>	Low	Generally used for face, neck, skin folds, and groin.
Hydrocortisone 1%, 2%, 2.5% Example: <i>Emo-Cort® (cream, lotion)</i> <i>Prevex® HC (cream)</i> <i>Topiderm HC (cream)</i> <i>(generics available)</i>		Hydrocortisone 1% is available OTC.
Beclomethasone dipropionate 0.025% Example: <i>Propaderm® (cream)</i>	Mid	Generally used for body areas, and not for face, neck, skin folds, and groin.
Betamethasone Valerate 0.05%, 0.1% Examples: <i>Betaderm (cream, ointment, scalp lotion)</i> <i>Celestoderm® V (cream, ointment)</i> <i>Luxiq® (foam)</i> <i>Prevex® B (cream)</i> <i>(generics available)</i>		
Diflucortolone Valerate 0.1% Example: <i>Nerisone® (cream, oily cream)</i>		
Fluocinolone Acetonide 0.01% Example: <i>Derma-Smoothe/FS® (oil)*</i>		*Derma-Smoothe/FS may be considered low to mid potency.
Hydrocortisone Valerate 0.2% Example: <i>HydroVal® (cream, ointment)</i>		
Mometasone Furoate 0.1% Example: <i>Elocom® (cream, lotion)</i>		Note that Mometasone Furoate 0.1% in an ointment vehicle is high potency.

Drug	TCS Potency	Use/Comments
<p>Betamethasone Dipropionate 0.025%, 0.05% Examples: <i>Diprosone® (cream, lotion, ointment)</i> (generics available)</p> <p>Desoximetasone 0.05%, 0.25% Examples: <i>Topicort® (cream, ointment)</i> <i>Topicort® Gel (gel)</i></p> <p>Fluocinonide 0.05% Examles: <i>Lidex® (cream, ointment, gel)</i> <i>Lyderm® (cream, ointment, gel)</i> <i>Lidemol® (cream)</i></p> <p>Mometasone Furoate 0.1% Examples: <i>Elocom® (ointment)</i> (generics available)</p> <p>Prednicarbate 0.1% Example: <i>Dermatop® (emollient cream, ointment)</i></p> <p>Triamcinolone acetonide 0.5% Examples: <i>Aristocort® (cream)</i></p>	High	<p>Note that Betamethasone Dipropionate in a glycol-based vehicle is ultra potent.</p> <p>Generally used for lichenified and thickened areas of eczema on the body.</p>
<p>Betamethasone Dipropionate Glycol 0.05% Example: <i>Diprolene®Glycol (cream, lotion, ointment)</i></p> <p>Clobetasol Propionate 0.05% Example: <i>Clobex™ Lotion (lotion)</i> <i>Dermovate® (cream, ointment, topical solution)</i> <i>Olux®-E (petrolatum-based emulsion aerosol foam)</i> (generics available)</p> <p>Halobetasol Propionate 0.05% Example: <i>UltraVate® (cream, ointment)</i></p>	Very High	<p>Generally used for palms of the hands and soles of the feet.</p> <p>Counsel patient on safe use and closely monitor for adverse effects.</p>

Antibiotic/Corticosteroid Combinations

Antibiotic/Corticosteroid combinations are used to address both inflammation and infection in atopic dermatitis with the combination of hydrocortisone and fusidic acid. The product monograph should be consulted for full information.

Drug	Dosage	Use/Comments
<p>Fusidic Acid 2% / Hydrocortisone 1% Example: <i>Fucidin® H (cream)</i></p>	TID	<p>Generally used in mild to moderate AD where <i>S. aureus</i> is suspected as a contributing factor.</p> <p>This treatment should not be used in or near the eyes due to the possibility of conjunctival irritation by fusidic acid. TCS should be used with caution in the eye area due to potential adverse effects.</p>

Topical Calcineurin Inhibitors

Topical calcineurin inhibitors (TCI) (e.g. tacrolimus and pimecrolimus) are second line anti-inflammatory medications that are recommended for the treatment of atopic dermatitis flares in non-immunocompromised patients 2 years of age and older. Tacrolimus ointment is also approved for twice weekly application as a long term maintenance therapy in areas of predictable flare. The product monograph should be consulted for full information.

Drug	Dosage	Use/Comments
Pimecrolimus cream 1% Example: <i>Elidel® (cream)</i>	BID	Generally used for mild to moderate atopic dermatitis. Pimecrolimus is applied as a thin layer to sufficiently cover the affected skin area twice daily. Pimecrolimus may be used on all skin surfaces, including the head, neck, and intertriginous areas. Care should be taken to avoid contact with nose, eyes and mouth. Not indicated for use in children <2 year of age or immunocompromised patients. Mild stinging and/or burning may occur upon application.
Tacrolimus ointment 0.03%, 0.1% Example: <i>Protopic® (ointment)</i>	BID Dosage: Pediatric (2-16 years old) 0.03%; Adult (>16 years old) 0.1%	Generally used for moderate to severe atopic dermatitis. Tacrolimus ointment is applied twice daily as a thin layer to areas affected by eczema, including the neck, face, and eyelids. Care should be taken to avoid contact with nose, eyes and mouth. Not indicated for use in children <2 year of age or immunocompromised patients. Mild stinging and/or burning may occur upon application.

Barrier Repair Products

Barrier repair products address the deficiencies in the skin barrier, partly due to lacking ceramides (lipids). There is one barrier repair product approved by Health Canada and classified as a medical device. It is available by prescription and behind the counter. The product monograph should be consulted for full information.

Drug	Dosage	Use/Comments
Ceramides/cholesterol/ free fatty acids Example: <i>EpiCeram® (cream)</i> <i>Skin Barrier Repair Emulsion</i>	BID	Generally used in all areas, including face, sensitive areas such as eyelids, and intertriginous regions. Mild burning or stinging can occur if applied to open areas of skin.

Notes:

- Health care providers and prescribers should consult product monograph for full information including treatment, dosing, and potential adverse effects.
- Steroid potency in this chart is meant to serve as a guide only, and is based on vasoconstrictor studies, information in product monographs, and the Compendium of Therapeutic Choices[®] Canadian Pharmacists Association, 2015.
- Medication vehicle impacts potency, such as with an ointment increasing the potency of a topical corticosteroid when compared to a cream.
- Occlusive wraps and bandages increases absorption of medication and should be used with caution under the supervision of the prescribing physician.
- Combination treatments may include a TCS that is either less potent or more potent than appropriate. Check the TCS component potency before prescribing combination treatments.
- Hydrocortisone 1% and clobetasone butyrate 0.5% are available without a prescription.
- References available upon request.

Legend:

BID - two times daily

TID - three times daily

TCS - Topical Corticosteroids

TCI - Topical Calcineurin Inhibitors

Disclaimers

1. This chart is provided as a general health information educational guide for health care providers (HCP) only. It is not intended for use by patients and/or caregivers.
2. This table does not provide complete information about the drug categories listed. The specific product monographs should be consulted for detailed information on each drug (for example, contraindications, adverse events, dosing and administration).
3. This chart is for general information purposes only; it is not a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis and treatment provided in the context of a HCP/patient relationship.
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