

TOPICAL CORTICOSTEROIDS

WHAT THEY ARE, WHAT THEY ARE FOR AND WHEN TO USE THEM



—What are corticosteroids?

They are a class of hormones that we all produce in glands located just above the kidneys. The most important is cortisol. Corticosteroids are essential for life and regulate numerous bodily functions.

—What are they used for?

Drugs used to treat various inflammatory diseases, such as asthma or dermatitis, have been developed from natural corticosteroids. Topical corticosteroids are those administered to the skin or mucosa.

—When are they used?

Corticosteroids can only be used when indicated by a doctor and always in accordance with the instructions regarding the frequency, form of application and duration of treatment.

Not all corticosteroids are the same. They are available in different potencies and different presentations. To choose the most appropriate, the type of lesion, region affected or age of the patient, amongst other aspects, are taken into account.

—Are they safe and effective?

When applied correctly, they are very safe and effective drugs, even for children. The amount of drug that may pass into the blood is minimal and adverse effects are rare if applied correctly.

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—What are the risks when they are applied incorrectly?

When used incorrectly (in a greater quantity than indicated, or with a greater potency than required, or for a longer period than needed), they may cause adverse and harmful health effects. They may cause skin abnormalities such as atrophy, stretch marks or rash, eye abnormalities such as cataracts and, very rarely, they may cause more important health problems, such as the body stopping producing cortisol.

SOURCES

Corticoides en pediatria: mitos y verdades

Blanca Laclaustra
y Pilar Lalana
Familia y salud (AEPap)

Corticoides tópicos: mitos y realidades

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