New Zealand Formulary
PATIENT INFORMATION

BETAMETHASONE (skin cream or ointment)

bee-ta-meth-a-sone

What does it do?

Betamethasone cream or ointment is a potent to very potent steroid used to treat skin conditions such as eczema and psoriasis.

Before you start

- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or breastfeeding.

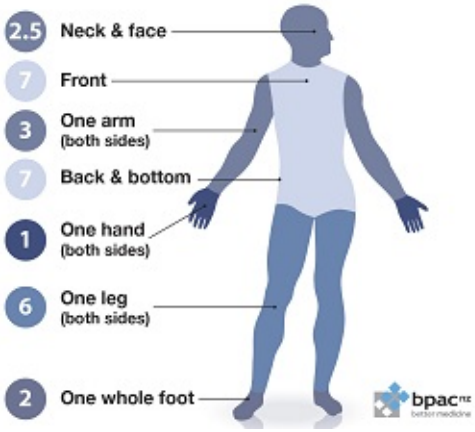
How should you use it?

Wash your hands, then apply to the affected area as directed and rub in gently. Wash your hands again after applying the cream or ointment, unless your hands are the affected area.

How much should I apply?
It is important to get the dose right. This is why a standard measure is used called the fingertip unit. One fingertip unit is the amount of cream or ointment squeezed out of the tube from the first crease of your index finger to the tip (see photo). One fingertip unit covers an area of skin twice the size of your handprint (fingers together and palm).

1 fingertip unit (FTU)

Number of fingertip units to use



What if you forget a dose?

If it is nearly time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and apply your next dose at the usual time. Otherwise, apply the missed dose as soon as you remember. Do not apply two doses at the same time.

Can you take other medicines?

Tell your pharmacist or doctor about all medicines or treatments that you may be taking, including vitamins, herbal products or recreational drugs.

What side effects might you notice?

If steroids are applied to the skin correctly, side effects are uncommon. If you use them continuously for a long time, are treating a large area, cover the area, or use a higher potency steroid than needed, then side effects may occur.

Side Effects	Recommended action
Skin thinning, stretch marks	Tell your doctor

If you notice any other effects, discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

Other information:

- Only use *betamethasone* on the affected area of skin you have been given it for. Using it on other skin conditions (such as infected skin) may make them worse.
- If you use *betamethasone* continuously for a long time, are treating a large area, or cover the area, you are at an increased risk of developing side effects such as: round face, change in body shape, change in hair growth, thinning of the bones, increased blood pressure and diabetes.
- If you are also using a moisturiser, use this 10 minutes before applying *betamethasone*.
- Take care not to get any *betamethasone* in your eyes. If you get any in your eyes, rinse well with water straight away. If you often get *betamethasone* in your eyes it can cause eye problems such as glaucoma and cataracts.