Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Tacrolimus (Topical

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it’s used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

## Brand Names: US

Protopic [DSC]

## Brand Names: Canada

Protopic

**Warning**
**All products:**

- Long-term safety of this drug is not known. Lymphoma, skin cancer, and other types of cancer have rarely happened in people treated with this drug. It is not known if this drug caused this effect. Do not use this drug without a break for a long time unless told to do so by the doctor. Use only on the affected skin. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.

**Protopic ointment 0.03%:**

- This drug is not approved for use in children younger than 2 years of age. Talk with the doctor.

**Protopic ointment 0.1%:**

- This drug is not approved for use in children younger than 16 years of age. Talk with the doctor.

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat eczema.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

## What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have any of these health problems: Skin areas that have cancers or pre-cancers, a skin disease called Netherton's syndrome, other skin problems that may weaken the skin, a skin infection (including chicken pox or herpes), or a weak immune system.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

## What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.

- Do not use longer than you have been told by the doctor.
- Avoid sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and wear clothing and eyewear that protects you from the sun.
- Do not have any kind of light therapy while you are using this drug.
- Talk with your doctor before you drink alcohol.
- Talk with your doctor before you use other drugs or products on your skin.
- Have your skin checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- It is common to have burning, stinging, soreness, or itching where this drug is put on. Most of the time, these happen during the first few days of treatment and go away as skin gets better. Call your doctor if any of these effects are very bad, bother you, or do not go away.
- This drug may cause harm if swallowed. If this drug is swallowed, call a doctor or poison control center right away.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, plan on getting pregnant, or are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby.

## What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.
- Signs of skin infection like oozing, heat, swelling, redness, or pain.
- Signs of kidney problems like unable to pass urine, change in how much urine is passed, blood in the urine, or a big weight gain.
- Fever.
- Ear pain.
- A skin lump or growth.
- Swollen gland.
- Muscle pain.

## What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Skin tingling.
- Skin irritation.
- Not able to handle heat or cold.
- Headache.
- Cough.
- Stuffy nose.
- Flu-like signs.
- Pimples (acne).
- Hair bumps.
- Upset stomach.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

## How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- Do not take this drug by mouth. Use on your skin only. Keep out of your mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Wash your hands before and after use. If your hand is the treated area, do not wash your hand after use.
- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.
- Do not put on healthy skin.
- Do not use coverings (bandages, dressings) unless told to do so by the doctor.
- Do not bathe, shower, or swim right after putting on.
- Stop this drug when health problem is gone.
- To help with skin reactions, moisturize your skin as your doctor has told you.
- If your signs do not get better after 6 weeks of care, talk with your doctor.

## What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Put on a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not put on 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

## How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep lid tightly closed.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

## General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information

leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.

- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

**Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer**

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider’s examination and assessment of a patient’s specific and unique circumstances. Patients

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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