Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Hydrocortisone (Topical

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ 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

Advanced Allergy Collection; Ala Scalp; Ala-Cort; Anucort-HC; Anusol-HC; Aquanil HC [OTC]; Beta HC [OTC]; Cortenema; Cortifoam; Evesse; FT Itch Relief Max Strength [OTC]; FT Itch Relief/Aloe Max Str [OTC]; Hemmorex-HC; Hydralyn; Hydravex; Hydrocort Lotion Complete Kit; Hydrocortisone Anti-Itch [OTC]; Hydrocortisone Max St [OTC]; Hydrocortisone Max St/12 Moist [OTC]; Hydrocortisone-Aloe Vera [OTC]; Hydrocortisone/Aloe Max Str [OTC]; Hydroryx; Hydroxate; Hydroxym; Instacort 5 [OTC]; Locoid Lipocream [DSC]; Locoid [DSC]; Medi-First Hydrocortisone [OTC]; Medpura Hydrocortisone [OTC]; MiCort HC [DSC]; NuCort; Pandel [DSC]; Preparation H Soothing Relief [OTC]; Preparation H [OTC]; Procto-Med HC; Proctocort; Proctosol HC; Proctozone-HC; Sarnol-HC [OTC]; Scalacort DK; Scalpicin Maximum Strength [OTC]; Texacort; Vanicream HC Maximum Strength [OTC]

Brand Names: Canada

Barriere-HC; Cortoderm; Hyderm; Hydroval; NOVO-Hydrocort; SANDOZ Hydrocortisone; Sarna HC

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat skin irritation.
- It is used to treat skin rashes.
- It is used to treat signs of hemorrhoids or rectal irritation.
- It is used to treat ulcerative colitis.

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

All products:

- 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.

All rectal products:

- If you have any of these health problems: Bowel block; fistula; a fungal infection; holes, sores, or wounds on the rectal area; peritonitis; or recent bowel surgery.

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?

All products:

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Do not put on cuts, scrapes, or damaged skin.
- This drug may cause harm if swallowed. If this drug is swallowed, call a doctor or poison control center right away.
- Do not use this drug for longer than you were told by your doctor.
- This drug may raise the chance of cataracts or glaucoma. Talk with the doctor.
- If the patient is a child, use this drug with care. The risk of some side effects may be higher in children.

- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.
- Some forms of this drug may not be for use in all ages of children. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- 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.

All skin products:

- Talk with your doctor before you use other drugs or products on your skin. This includes soaps.
- Use care when using on a large part of the skin. Talk with the doctor.
- Some products may not be for use in the diaper area. Talk with the doctor.
- If you are breast-feeding and use this drug on your breast or nipple, wash the area before breast-feeding your child.

All rectal products:

- Talk with the doctor before you use other drugs or products in the rectal area.
- Have your blood work and bone density checked as you have been told by your doctor.
- Have your eye pressure checked if you are on this drug for a long time. Talk with your doctor.
- You may have more chance of getting an infection. Wash hands often. Stay away from people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Talk with your doctor if you come into contact with anyone who has chickenpox or measles and you have not had chickenpox, measles, or the vaccines for them.
- If you have high blood sugar (diabetes), talk with your doctor. This drug may raise blood sugar.

- Check your blood sugar as you have been told by your doctor.

Suppository:

- This drug may stain clothing or fabric. Protect clothing and fabrics from staining.

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:

All products:

- 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 high blood sugar like confusion, feeling sleepy, unusual thirst or hunger, passing urine more often, flushing, fast breathing, or breath that smells like fruit.
- Signs of a weak adrenal gland like a severe upset stomach or throwing up, severe dizziness or passing out, muscle weakness, feeling very tired, mood changes, decreased appetite, or weight loss.
- Signs of Cushing's syndrome like weight gain in the upper back or belly, moon face, severe headache, or slow healing.
- Change in eyesight.
- Very bad headache.
- Irritation where this drug was used.
- Skin changes (pimples, stretch marks, slow healing, hair growth).
- Thinning of the skin.

All skin products:

- Signs of skin infection like oozing, heat, swelling, redness, or pain.

All rectal products:

- Signs of infection like fever, chills, very bad sore throat, ear or sinus pain, cough, more sputum or change in color of sputum, pain with passing urine, mouth sores, or wound that will not heal.
- Very bad bleeding from rectum or rectal pain.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Swelling.
- Bone or joint 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:

- Burning or stinging.
- Dryness.
- Tingling.

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.

All skin products:

- Do not take this drug by mouth. Use on your skin only. Keep out of your mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Do not put in the vagina.
- Use as you have been told, even if your signs get better.
- 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 use coverings (bandages, dressings) unless told to do so by the doctor.
- Do not put on the face, underarms, or the groin area unless told to do so by the doctor.
- Do not use tight-fitting diapers or plastic pants if treated part is in the diaper area. This may cause more drug to get into the body.

Lotion:

- Shake well before use.

All rectal products:

- This drug is for rectal use only. Do not take this drug by mouth.
- Use as you have been told, even if your signs get better.
- Wash your hands before and after use.

Rectal cream:

- This drug may also be used on the skin around the anus.
- Clean the area before using this drug if you are able to. Pat or blot dry with toilet tissue or a soft cloth.

Rectal enema:

- Shake well before use.
- Be careful when using the enema. If used in a careless way or if the enema tip is put in the wrong way, this can lead to damage to the area.

Rectal foam:

- Shake well before use.
- Use an applicator to put in foam. Do not put the foam container right into the rectum.
- This drug may catch on fire. Do not use near an open flame or while smoking.

Suppository:

- Take foil off the rectal suppository and put in, pointed end first. Do not handle too much.
- If suppository is soft, chill in a refrigerator or run cold water over it.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Use 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 use 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

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

All products:

- Store at room temperature. Do not freeze.
- 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.

Rectal foam:

- Protect from heat or open flame. Do not puncture or burn even if it seems empty.

Suppository:

- Protect from heat.

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.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, 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 must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

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If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

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

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