

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; FT Itch Relief Max Strength [OTC]; FT Itch Relief/Aloe Max Str [OTC]; Hemmorex-HC; 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]; Hydroxate; Hydroxym; Instacort 5 [OTC]; Locoid Lipocream [DSC]; Locoid [DSC]; Medi-First Hydrocortisone [OTC]; Medpura Hydrocortisone [OTC]; MiCort HC; 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 the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

All products:

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.

All rectal products:

- If your child has 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 the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

All products:

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's 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 have your child use longer than you have been told by your child's 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.

If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is pregnant, becomes pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby.
- If your child is breast-feeding a baby and uses this drug on the breast or nipple, have your child wash the area before breast-feeding the baby.

All skin products:

- Talk with your child's doctor before you use other drugs or products on your child's 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.

All rectal products:

- Talk with the doctor before you use other drugs or products in the rectal area.
- Have your child's blood work and bone density checked as you have been told by the doctor.
- Have your child's eye pressure checked if your child is on this drug for a long time. Talk with the doctor.
- Your child may have more chance of getting infections. Have your child wash hands often. Avoid crowds and people with infections, colds, or flu.
- Talk with the doctor if your child comes into contact with anyone who has chickenpox or measles and your child has not had chickenpox, measles, or the vaccines for them.
- If your child has high blood sugar (diabetes), talk with the doctor. This drug can raise blood sugar.
- Check your child's blood sugar as you have been told by the 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 child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has 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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child 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 child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All skin products:

- Do not give by mouth. Use on your child's skin only. Keep out of your child's mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Do not put in the vagina.
- Keep using this drug as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your

child's signs get better.

- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- Put a thin layer on the affected part and rub in gently.
- Do not use coverings (bandages, dressings) unless told to do so by the doctor.
- Do not put on your child's 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 give this drug by mouth.
- Keep using this drug as you have been told by your child's doctor or other health care provider, even if your child's 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 my child misses a dose?

- Give a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your child's next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your child's normal time.
- Do not give 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 child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's 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>.

Last Reviewed Date

2026-03-16

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors.

All rights reserved.

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.

Hydrocortisone (Topical - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center