

Supporting Care Homes

TOPICAL MEDICATION and APPLICATION RECORD SHEET

Administering topical medication – key points

- Check product expiry date before use. Highlight any short expiry dates as a reminder to all staff.
- Many topical medicines will have a shortened expiry date once opened and will need to be disposed of.
- Once opened ensure either the date opened or the 'use by' date is clearly recorded on the label or medicine packaging. Refer to the medicines policy to determine which process the care home uses. N.B. Sometimes packaging makes it difficult for the pharmacy label to be placed on the product (e.g. eye drops). In these circumstances the date opened or 'use by' date should be written on the outer packaging. In such cases, it is essential that the product remains in the outer packaging throughout duration of this treatment.
- Any product whose appearance suggests it may be unfit for use should be discarded. If there is any doubt contact the community pharmacy / dispensary for advice.
- Use a Topical Medicines Application Record (TMAR) for recording administration of topical preparations and the 'use by' date information for topical medications. A suggested TMAR topical medicines application record sheet is attached.
- Gloves should always be used when applying topical medication.
- Ensure lids or tops of containers or tubes are replaced securely after use.
- Always review the amount being used and ordered– some topical preparations are available in various sizes which are more appropriate to what's needed – think waste!

Procedure for residents unable to apply their own prescribed topical medication

- A registered nurse or senior care assistant with appropriate training should complete a TMAR for each topical medication prescribed. Ideally this should include a body map. The TMAR should be checked and countersigned.
- The TMAR should be kept in the resident's room.
- The care assistant, registered nurse or senior care assistant should sign the TMAR when they have applied a topical medicine in line with the instructions.
- It is also good practice to record in the daily records to reflect the correct administration carried out e.g. washed resident with emollient.
- The Medical Administration Record (MAR) chart should state 'see TMAR chart'.
- At the end of each 28 day cycle the TMAR should be attached to the corresponding MAR chart to provide a full record of administration.

'Use by' dates for topical preparations after opening

Some products show an expiry symbol e.g. . Always refer to the manufacturers packaging or information leaflet for details of expiry dates.

However, where this symbol is not present the following 'use by' dates are suggested:

Formulation and packing	Suggested 'use by' date after opening unless otherwise stated by manufacturer and still within manufacturer's expiry date	Rationale
Tubs of creams or ointments	One month	The contents are exposed and can become contaminated
Tubes of creams or ointments	Three months	Closed container, contents less exposed to environment
Pump dispenser packs of creams or ointment	Refer to manufacturer's expiry	Closed container, contents not openly exposed to environment
Tubs of cream specially made for individual	Seek community pharmacy or dispensary advice	Dependent on stability of product

What quantities of cream or ointments are needed?

As a guide, the following table shows the suitable quantities of topical creams or ointments for an adult.

Area of the body	Creams and Ointments
Face and neck	15 - 30g
Both hands	15 - 30g
Scalp	15 - 30g
Both arms	30 - 60g
Both legs	100g
Trunk	100g
Groin and genitalia	15 - 30g

These amounts are usually suitable for an adult for a single daily application for two weeks

Reference: BNF 74 September 2017

Advice for administering topical corticosteroids

Topical corticosteroids should not be applied more frequently than twice daily.

To avoid using too much topical steroid the amount needed can be measured in fingertip units (FTU) (the distance from the fingertip to the first crease of the finger in an adult index finger).

One FTU is approximately 500mg of cream or ointment which is enough to cover an area that is twice that of the flat adult handprint (palm and fingers).



Area of skin to be treated (adults)	Fingertips units (FTUs) each dose (adults)
Genitals	0.5
Hands, elbows and knees	1
Feet, including the soles	1.5
Face and neck	2.5
Scalp	3
Hand and arm together, or the buttocks	4
Legs and chest, or legs and back	8

Please visit our website for more information: <https://www.westhampshireccg.nhs.uk/medicines-in-care-homes>

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