



EUROPEAN
ACADEMY OF
DERMATOLOGY &
VENEREOLOGY

Information Leaflet
for Patients

Use of steroid creams in pregnancy



The aim of this leaflet

This leaflet is designed to tell you more about the use of steroid creams in pregnancy, its benefits, and possible problems.

Use of steroid creams in pregnancy

What are steroid creams?

Steroids are produced naturally by the body. They reduce inflammation and have been altered to make it possible to use them directly on the skin rather than having to take steroid tablets orally. Using them directly on the skin for skin conditions reduces the side effects for other organs compared to taking them as tablets.

What are steroid creams used for?

They are used to treat many itchy skin conditions in pregnancy, including *eczema*, sometimes *psoriasis*, atopic eruption of pregnancy, and specific pregnancy skin diseases called *polymorphic eruption of pregnancy* and *pemphigoid gestationis*. It is important during pregnancy to use treatments that are as safe as possible for both mother and baby.

How can steroid creams be used safely during pregnancy?

The use of emollients, moisturising creams, and ointments can help with inflammation and discomfort of the skin, as can bathing or showering using emollients and soap substitutes, and therefore lessen the need for steroid creams.

Steroid creams or the greasier steroid ointments are often necessary to relieve symptoms like itch and inflammation. The steroid cream or ointment should only be applied to affected areas of skin and a **mild** (for example hydrocortisone) or **moderate** steroid cream should be

used. The amount should be as small as possible, and ideally only 1-2 small (15-30 gm) tubes should be used for a few days and intermittently. However, if the condition is severe, application of a stronger steroid cream or ointment to the skin in larger quantities is still better than taking steroid tablets per mouth.

Are the treatments safe for the baby and mother?

Mild to moderate strength steroid creams or ointments appear to be safe during pregnancy and can be used safely, but large amounts of stronger steroid creams and ointments may cause problems with the growth of the unborn baby, so that they may be born small.

Is any special monitoring required?

Yes, regular follow-up at an antenatal clinic is important if the mother is using large amounts of strong steroid creams or ointments (more than 50 gm, 1/2 large tube per month or over 200-300 gm, 2-3 large tubes in the whole pregnancy).

While every effort has been made to ensure that the information given in this leaflet is accurate, not every treatment will be suitable or effective for every person. Your own clinician will be able to advise in greater detail.