



KAISER PERMANENTE

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DEPARTMENT OF DERMATOLOGY

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## INSTRUCTIONS ON THE USE OF TOPICAL STEROIDS

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Topical steroids are very effective for many patients with skin rashes, but they should be used with caution to avoid side effects. Topical steroids come in many different brands, strengths and preparations (for instance, creams, ointments and lotions).

**Follow the suggestions below:**

1. Apply a THIN amount to the rash areas twice daily.
2. Avoid spreading the steroid medicine to the surrounding, normal skin -- it can cause thinning of the skin.
3. When the rash improves, gradually reduce the frequency of application -- go to once daily, then every other day, then once or twice a week as necessary to control the condition.
4. Avoid applying topical steroids to the face, genital area and skin folds (that means the armpits, in front of the elbows, behind the knees, and the inner part of the thighs) unless you are specifically advised to do so by your doctor or nurse practitioner. In general, a mild, lower strength steroid will be used in these areas.

Skin problems that can occur with excessive use of topical steroids include skin thinning, stretch marks, hair follicle bumps, facial redness and acne-like lesions.