Cortisone and why people fear it in 5 points

By Dr. Bourrel Bouitaz
**Point 1: natural cortisone**

Cortisone is produced by our body, by the name of cortisol, and serves as a fuel. It gives a boost in the morning, with levels peaking at about 8 am, then continues to be produced throughout the day, with a drop in production at around 3 am. This hormone plays a role in the metabolism of sugar and fat, and also affects sleep and the immune system. It is released in response to chronic stress (everyday life), while adrenaline is released in response to severe stress (such as a truck heading directly for you).

It has potent anti-inflammatory properties, hence why it is used in medicine. Cortisone is available in the form of tablets, injections, creams and ointments.

The dangerous side effects of cortisone only occur when it is taken orally or by injection, and include weight gain, arterial hypertension, diabetes, osteoporosis, bone fractures, etc.

But none of these can occur when it is applied topically, because...

**Point 2: it is destroyed by inflammation**

If cortisone is applied to normal skin, it penetrates the skin and may be absorbed into the bloodstream. On the other hand, if it is applied to inflamed skin, it is immediately destroyed by the inflammation. It barely penetrates the skin, and besides, the amount that penetrates is so small, it is not enough to exert a toxic effect elsewhere in the body.

A cortisone cream *reduces inflammation* and *prevents inflammation from recurring*.

So why is it recommended that you continue to apply the cream twice a week to areas prone to eczema (such as the folds of the elbows and knees)? **Two reasons:**
If you could look at the skin through a microscope, you would see that the inflammation is still there, ready to flare up again.

By applying cortisone twice a week to areas where eczema patches have disappeared, this actually prevents the eczema from coming back. Moreover, the total amount of cortisone applied over one year is much lower than it would be if you didn’t do this.

**Point 3: why does cortisone get such bad press?**

**It doesn’t heal**

To control eczema, you need to do more than just moisturize the skin and treat with cortisone. You must also identify the trigger factors and try to prevent them. You also need to treat the digestive flora by taking probiotics and following an anti-inflammatory, low-acid diet.

**It stops toxins from coming out**

You’ll often hear people say that, “toxins must be flushed out, otherwise they build up in the body – and that’s dangerous.” Hippocrates referred to the excretory function of the skin, some 2,500 years ago...

Toxins are indeed eliminated by the skin, via sweat and sebum, but a cortisone cream does not affect the functioning of sweat and sebaceous glands. So regardless of whether you apply cortisone or not, toxins will still be eliminated as usual.

**Point 4: but surely there’s another solution?**

Atopic dermatitis is a chronic condition, and this is difficult for both the parents and the patient to accept. Every time there is a flare-up, you need to go through the checklist again. What triggered it? Could you have seen it coming? Do you need to treat the digestive flora again?

Some patients will have good results with other medicines, but whatever choice you make, the basic approach remains the same:

- the skin is dry: you mustn’t exacerbate dry skin and must moisturize well every day,
- you need to learn to listen to your body and your skin, to understand what makes your skin react,
- there’s no point in suffering; focus on feeling better,
- if stress is a key element, find ways to help you better cope with stress (relaxation therapy, hypnosis, etc.),
- look after your digestive flora.

**Point 5: but the real reason behind the fear of cortisone comes from...**

Doctors themselves. Studies show that differing views within the medical community simply leave parents feeling even more confused. Therapeutic education centers are the leading authorities on how to treat atopic dermatitis.
More details about some of the points covered

1/ Trigger factors are:

- **Anything that can exacerbate dry skin**: the cold, water, soaps, all chemical products, fragrances, dust, home improvement, pollen.
- **Anything that can disrupt the skin’s balance**: sweat combined with overly acidic food.
- **Anything that can disrupt the digestive flora**: overly acidic food, antibiotics, gastroenteritis, etc.
- **Stress**.

2/ Diet: two types of food should be avoided as they can aggravate eczema.

- **Acidifying foods**: candy, cakes, soda, bread, pasta, breakfast cereals, energy bars, honey, tomatoes, citrus fruits (lemons, tangerines, oranges, grapefruits).
- **Inflammatory foods**: all industrially produced food, any oils that aren’t first cold-pressed, too many cow-based dairy products, cooked meats, too much red meat.