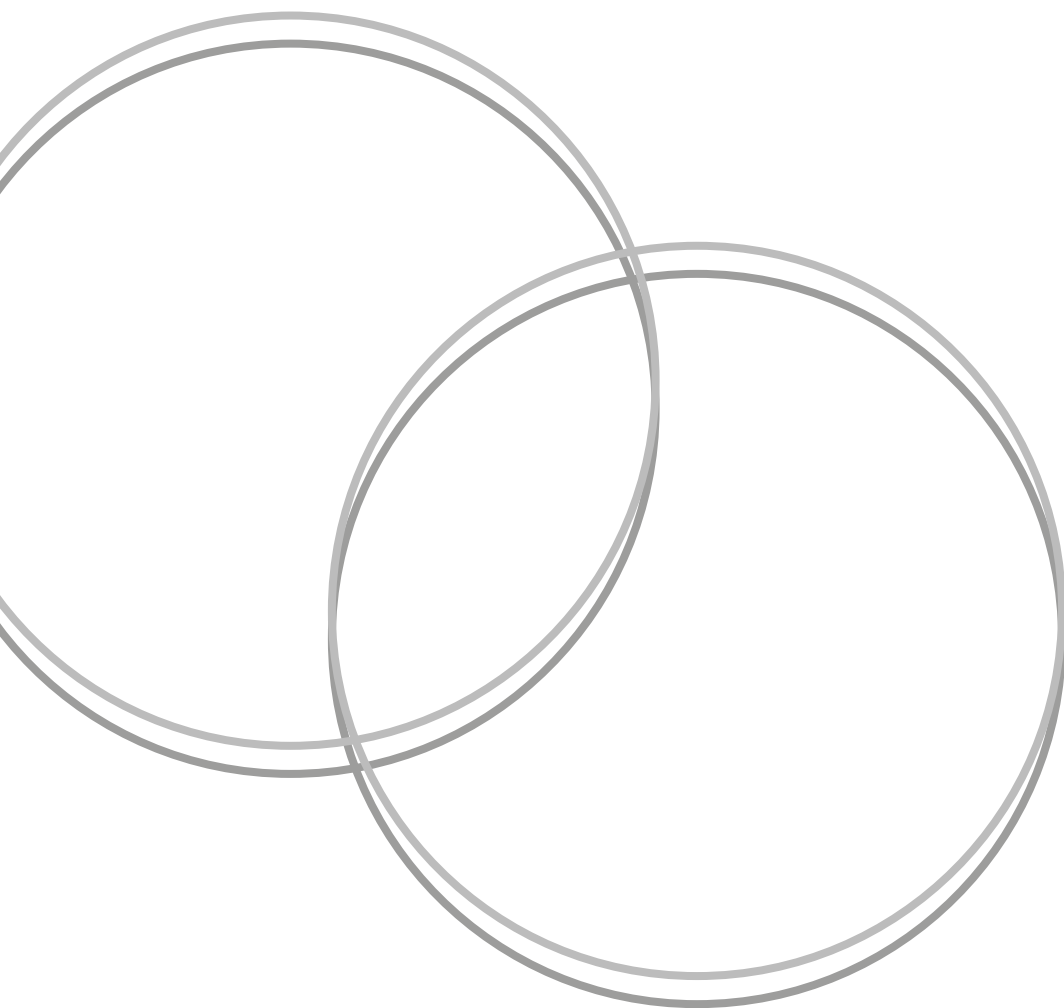


# **Betnovate Scalp Application – for use as ear drops**

**Information for patients**



You have been given this scalp application to use as ear drops. This medicine was originally licensed for the treatment of eczema on the scalp; however we are prescribing it to be used in an unlicensed way as ear drops. This is to try to manage the excessive amount of skin that is building up in your ear canals as a result of your eczema type condition. Although this is a scalp application, it is perfectly safe to use in your ear canals.

These drops are a steroid based medication and must only be used as directed. Steroids are a group of drugs which are potent anti-inflammatories. When used in your ears, they can reduce the over production of skin which is contributing to your problems. However, it is important that you do not use too much of this medication, as it can cause the already naturally thin normal skin in your ear to get thinner.

## **What is Betnovate Scalp Application?**

- It contains Betamethasone Valerate 0.1%, a moderate potency (medium strength) steroid, in an alcohol solution.
- The steroid works by switching off some of the chemical signals causing further inflammation in the affected skin.
- The alcohol solution transports the steroid into difficult to reach areas of the ear and kills bugs on the skin surface (this is why it may help Ear Eczema, when steroid creams may not reach the affected part).

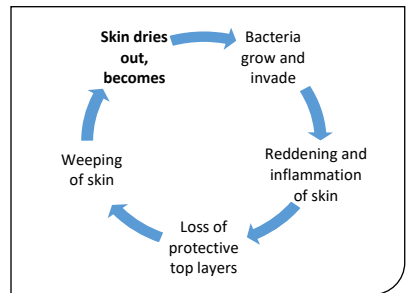
## **Is Betnovate safe in children /pregnancy /breastfeeding?**

- Betnovate can be used in children over 1 year of age.
- No studies have shown whether using topical steroids in pregnancy or breastfeeding is harmful to humans, but it is unlikely a significant amount of the medicine is passed to the baby.

# What is Chronic Ear Eczema?

Like the skin on the outside of the body, the skin inside the ear canal can become inflamed and irritated. This can be due to:

- A bacterium or fungus growing on the skin surface.
- An irritant substance which comes into contact with the ear canal (for example, some soaps or chlorinated water).
- Physical irritation of the skin, e.g., by itching or poking objects into the ear canal, including use of cotton buds.
- A sensitivity in the body's immune system (called Atopic Eczema).
- Healthy skin produces a steady supply of cells which harden and die as they reach the skin surface, providing a protective layer. These are then naturally shed from the surface. Ear wax contains a mixture of these dead cells and protective oils made by the skin.



- In eczema, inflammation causes the top layers of the skin to become leaky and dry out. Cracks in the skin surface can allow bacteria to invade the protective barrier, which can cause further irritation.
- Antibiotic ear drops which kill bacteria in the ear are useful for a short-term ear infection, when the ear is sore or has a smelly discharge. However, prolonged use may result in the skin becoming sensitive to the antibiotic or allow other bugs (such as fungi) to grow in their place.

For ears which are itchy and flaky for a longer period, treatment aims to restore the skin's natural protection by:

- Reducing inflammation.
- Locking moisture into the skin surface.
- Reducing itch (and therefore risk of reinfection due to scratching).

**It is important that you follow these instructions carefully.**

## **How to use your ear drops**

### **First two weeks of treatment:**

- Warm the drops to body temperature before you use them. You can do this easily by placing the bottle in your pocket for half an hour before use; this will warm the drops enough, so that they are not too cold when they go into your ear.
- You may find that the first time you use the drops you experience a slight hot or burning type of sensation – this is normal and should wear off after 15 minutes.
- Put **two drops** in your affected ear/ears, every night for **two weeks** then **stop**.

### **After the first two weeks of treatment, you should then use the drops as follows:**

- Two drops of solution only in whichever ear itches, whenever it itches, but no more than twice in one day.

### **Using the drops in the long term:**

If you have been advised to continue using the drops in the long term it is better to dilute them. This will not affect their ability to work.

- Dilute the Betnovate with equal parts of sterile/cooled boiled water (the same amount of water as Betnovate). Store the made-up solution in your refrigerator for up to one month. Discard the made-up solution after a month; it might be helpful to write an expiry date on the bottle, to remind you when to throw it away. Please remember to warm the drops each time before you use them.
- **Do not use the diluted drops more than twice a day.**

Most chemists can supply you with a small 'dropper' style bottle. This will make putting the diluted ear drops in much easier.

# How to put in your ear drops

1. Read the instructions on the bottle. Check on:
  - the number of drops required
  - which ear(s) to put the drops in
  - how many times a day (no more than twice).
2. If possible, ask someone else to put the drops in for you. Lie on a bed with the ear to be treated facing the ceiling. Warm the drops further by holding the bottle in your hand for a few minutes.
3. Take a firm hold of your ear; pull it gently backwards, then up and away from your head. This will make your ear canal straighter, so that the drops go in more easily. Put the prescribed amount of ear drops into your ear canal.
4. To make sure that all your ear canal is coated with drops, gently pull your ear backwards and upwards, and then let go. You can also press rapidly on the small piece of cartilage towards the front of your ear (as if you were trying to block your ears).
5. Stay lying on the same side for at least 5 minutes – time it by the clock. This gives the drops time to soak in.
6. Place a piece of cotton wool in the outer part of your ear canal, just to prevent any of the drops running out. Make sure you use enough cotton wool so that you can easily remove it. Remove the cotton wool after 10 minutes.
7. Sit up slowly.
8. If both ears need drops, wait for 10 minutes before treating the second ear, so that you don't lose the drops from the first ear when you lie on the other side.

## **What are the benefits?**

We have found this treatment to be very effective for people who have suffered from frequent bouts of otitis externa (redness and swelling) caused by eczema, with associated itching. The treatment should reduce the amount of skin building up and reduce the itchiness.

## **Risks and side effects**

You may find that you experience a hot or burning sensation when you first use the drops – this is entirely normal and should be expected. You may also experience the following reactions:

- Thinning of the skin inside your ear; this will return to normal after you stop the treatment.
- Spreading or worsening of infected eczema if it is not treated.
- Contact dermatitis (inflammation of the skin) on your hands and the inside or outside of your ear.
- Occasionally, colour changes to the skin near to where the drops have been applied.

## How long should I use Betnovate Scalp Application for?

Betnovate Scalp Application can be used long-term for control of eczema. We recommend using it as below for the first ten weeks, after which, you can use Betnovate as infrequently as needed to keep itching in your ear under control. In some people, this may be as little as once a week. If you intend to use it long-term, ask your GP to add the medication to your repeat prescription.

A localised reaction or skin irritation can occur in some patients. Other side effects are very rare, these include a very small risk of causing problems with the body's levels of the hormone Cortisol.

If you experience tinnitus (ringing or whistling in your ears), hearing loss or any other symptoms not mentioned in this leaflet, please stop using this medication and contact your Aural Care Specialist Nurse Practitioner on the number at the end of this leaflet.

Please note that this medication is a licensed medication, however this way of using it is unlicensed. It is still a perfectly safe and well recognised way of using this medication and should not cause any other problems than those detailed previously. If you have concerns about using it, please speak to your Aural Care Specialist Nurse Practitioner.

## How to contact us

If you experience any problems or have any questions whilst using this medication, please speak to your GP or contact your Aural Care Specialist Nurse Practitioner.

### **Aural Care Specialist Nurse Practitioner:**

Telephone: 01865 231201 or 01865 231202

(Monday to Thursday, 8.00am to 4.00pm)

(Friday, 8.00am to 1.00pm)

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

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