

Types of Topical Medications

Ointment

Emulsion of *water in oil*

Greasy vehicle that provides enhanced penetration; occlusive, therefore don't use on infected or oozing skin

#1 (most lubricating) for dry skin, hyperkeratotic, and lichenified lesions (e.g., psoriasis, lichen simplex chronicus, chronic eczema)

Cream

Emulsion of *oil in water*

Less moisturizing than ointments, but more cosmetically appealing

Useful in acute and subacute dermatoses

Gel

Usually alcohol-based, transparent and colorless

Liquefies on contact with skin

Nongreasy, non-occlusive, nonstaining

Use in *hair-bearing* areas or when *drying* is desired

Solution

A liquid vehicle: propylene glycol, water or alcohol

Useful under cosmetics, in *hair-bearing* regions, and when drying is desired

Lotion

Suspension of a *powder in water*; leaves a film of uniform powder on skin

Less moisturizing than a cream

Good for *hair-bearing* areas

Foams

Any area, but especially *scalp*

Easy application, with less grease/residue

Powders

Promote drying

Used in *intertriginous* areas to reduce moisture, friction,

Maceration

Paste

Mixture of powder and ointment

Used for *diaper and intertriginous dermatitis*