

The "fingertip unit" of topical steroids

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This article was inspired by a [comment](#) from Dr Ewen McPhee (a rural GP) who mentioned the use of the "fingertip unit" in the article on [topical corticosteroids](#).

The "fingertip unit" was originally described by Long and Finlay in 1991 and is a handy guide for both doctors and patients to describe quantities of corticosteroid cream (1).

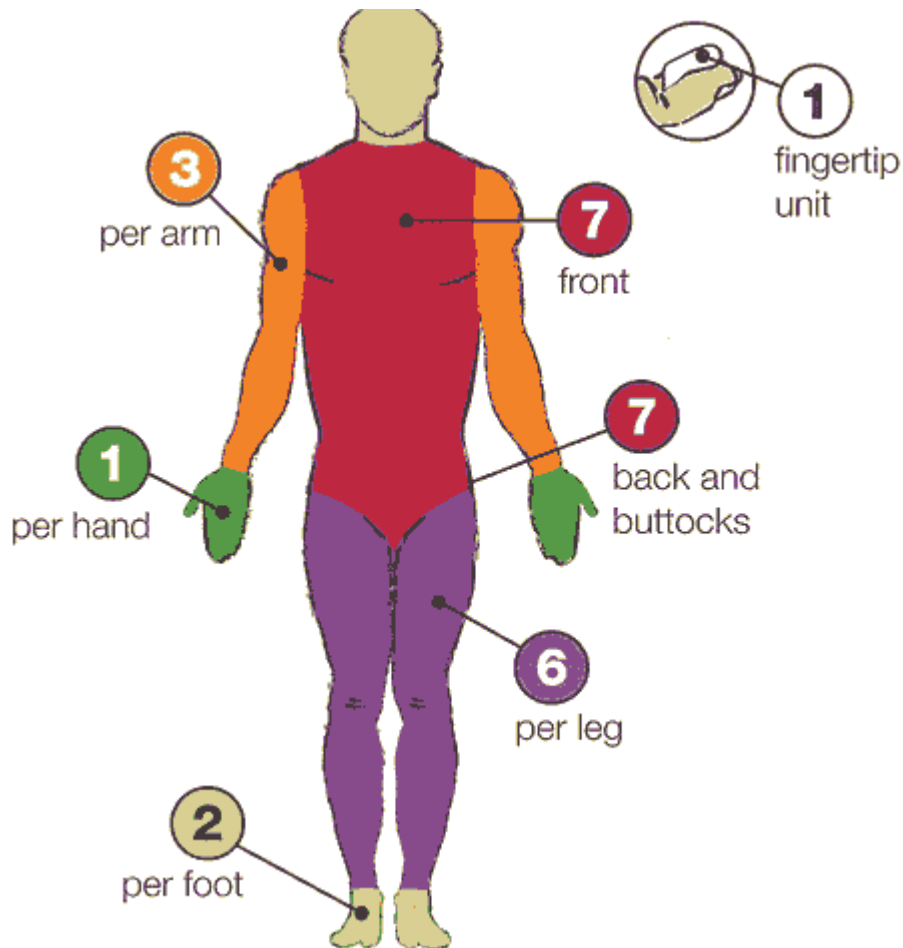
In essence, one "fingertip unit" is equivalent to 20-25 mm of cream or ointment squeezed onto the "fingertip". One "fingertip unit" is approximately 0.5 g of cream or ointment and is enough to cover the front and back of a single hand.

The fingertip unit

One fingertip unit = 0.5 g of cream or ointment = two hand (palm) surfaces

Fingertip units for body surfaces

The following diagram was liberated from a dosing handout by Schering-Plough Pty Ltd for mometasone furoate 0.1% cream (Elocon):



Note: "hand" refers to the entire hand (i.e., palmar *and* dorsal surfaces)

For example:

An adult patient has atopic dermatitis over the trunk and back with an area equivalent in size to approximately 4 hand (palm) surfaces. This is equivalent to **2 fingertip units** or **1 g** of cream

If the cream is applied once a day and the tube contains 30 g of corticosteroid cream, then we would expect that the tube should last approximately 30 days.

Reference article

(1) Long C., Finlay A. The finger tip unit... a new practical measure. *Clin Exp Dermatol* 1991; 16: 444-7. [[Link](#)]