

Master the Essentials: Dermatologic Medications

This table shows the various dermatologic medications and key side effects, contraindications and precautions, interactions, and examples of each classification.

Class	Use	Side Effects	Contraindications and Precautions	Interactions	Examples
Benzoyl peroxide	Treatment of acne	Peeling, erythema, edema	Hypersensitivity	Tretinoin	Benzoyl peroxide (Clearskin, PanOxyl, many other brands)
Retinoids	Tretinoin: Treatment of severe acne; reduction in appearance of fine wrinkles Tazarotene: reduction in appearance of fine wrinkles	Photosensitivity, local reactions (topical); depression, suicidal ideation, pseudotumor cerebri, pancreatitis, visual changes, hepatotoxicity, hypertriglyceridemia (oral)	Hypersensitivity, pregnancy	Other topical products, photosensitizers	Tretinoin (Retin-A, Renova, Avita), tazarotene (Tazorac)
Scabicides and pediculicides	Infection with lice or scabies (parasites that lay eggs or live on hair or skin)	Eczema, rash, redness, itching, burning, headache	Hypersensitivity	Oils, pentobarbital, diazepam	Lindane, permethrin (Nix)
Keratolytics	Acne, dandruff, seborrhea, or psoriasis Removal of warts, corns, and calluses	Burning, irritation, tinnitus, dizziness, ototoxicity, headaches (oral)	Hypersensitivity, prolonged use, irritated skin, moles, birthmarks, or warts with hair growth, mucous membranes	Usually none with topical use	Salicylic acid (Compound W, Clearasil, Stridex), ammonium lactate (Lac-Hydrin lotion)
Topical antifungals	Fungal infection of the skin (ringworm, athlete's foot, jock itch, vaginal yeast infections, and diaper rash)	Burning, stinging, pruritus, erythema	Hypersensitivity	None reported	Clotrimazole (Mycelex, Lotrimin, Gyne-Lotrimin), ketoconazole (Nizoral), nystatin (Mycostatin)
Topical corticosteroids	Inflammation and rashes caused by allergic reactions, psoriasis, or eczema	Burning, itching, irritation	Hypersensitivity (use on the face, groin, or axillae), pregnancy	None reported	Hydrocortisone (Westcort, Cortaid), dexamethasone (Decadron)
Topical immunomodulators	Severe atopic dermatitis	Burning, pruritus	Hypersensitivity, pregnancy, breastfeeding	Formal studies not performed	Pimecrolimus (Elidel), tacrolimus (Protopic)
Antipsoriatic agents	Dandruff, psoriasis, psoriatic arthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, skin cancer	Irritation to surrounding skin; discoloration of skin, hair, or fabrics	Hypersensitivity, use on the face, renal disease, pregnancy, breastfeeding, hypercalcemia (calcipotriene)	Topical corticosteroids	Coal tar (T/Gel, Neutrogena), anthralin (Dritho-Scalp, Psori-atec), cyclosporine (Gengraf, Neoral), etanercept (Enbrel), methotrexate (Trexall)
Topical fluorouracil	Scaly skin, superficial basal cell carcinoma	Erythema, burning, vesicle formation, insomnia, photosensitivity, malaise	Hypersensitivity, pregnancy	None reported	Fluorouracil (Efudex, Fluoroplex, Carac)