

PRACTICE PROTOCOL  
FOR THERAPEUTICALLY CERTIFIED  
OPTOMETRISTS' USE OF TOPICAL STERIODS

This practice protocol is hereby adopted collaboratively and jointly by the Maryland State Board of Examiners in Optometry and the Maryland State Board of Physicians pursuant to Chapter 391 of the Acts of the Maryland General Assembly of 2005.

1. Purpose. The purpose of this practice protocol is to set out the appropriate circumstances under which a therapeutically certified optometrist (“TCO”) may, within professional discretion and judgment, administer and prescribe topical steroids for the treatment of ocular inflammation.
2. Dissemination. It shall be the responsibility of the State Board of Examiners in Optometry (“the Optometry Board”) to see that this practice protocol is widely disseminated to all TCO’s they are defined by Md. Code Ann. Article Health-General 11-101(h).
3. Prohibition. A TCO may not administer topical steroids when the patient exhibits symptoms which would lead a reasonably prudent TCO to believe the application of steroids are contraindicated.
4. Application. Except as prohibited by Section 3 of this protocol, a TCO may topically apply steroids to treat ocular inflammation.
5. Knowledge. A TCO shall have a full understanding of the properties of each topical steroid he applies, including side effects.
6. Selection. A TCO shall choose the proper steroidal pharmaceutical agent that is suitable for care, given the patient’s condition.

7. Allergy Determination. The TCO shall make reasonable efforts to determine whether an allergic reaction will occur by making all necessary inquiries of the patient to learn if any evidence exists that would indicate the possibility of an allergic reaction.
8. Patient Advisory. The TCO shall warn the patient of possible side effects that may result from the use of the drug.
9. Mandatory Consultation. The TCO shall monitor the patient adequately while the patient is under the effects of the administered or prescribed topical steroid. The TCO shall consult with an ophthalmologist if the patient does not have the expected response to the treatment within 72 hours.
10. Dispensing Conditions. A TCO may only dispense topical steroids to a patient if:
  - (i) no charge is imposed for the topical steroid or for dispensing the topical steroid; and
  - (ii) the amount dispensed does not exceed a 72 hour supply, except that if the minimum available quantity for dispensing is greater than a 72 hour supply, the minimum available may be dispensed.