



SOL STUDIO



Eczema & Topical Steroid
Withdrawal Guide

Welcome!

ECZEMA AND TOPICAL STEROID WITHDRAWAL (TSW) OFTEN GO HAND IN HAND.

The health system is quick to prescribe steroids for eczema, and while steroids help alleviate symptoms in the short term, they're leaving people with much bigger issues to deal with in the long run.

Steroids mask. They don't treat eczema long-term.

And the experience some people have after steroid use is now being recognised as a chronic, painful side effect: Topical Steroid Withdrawal.

NOW DON'T GET US WRONG

Steroids have a legitimate place. They get people through acute flares, but the problem is they're used as the only tool, with no consideration of skin as part of a whole-body system. Medical care doesn't currently account for how skin responds to internal and external factors. That's not part of the standard approach. So when treatment stops and nothing's been done to support the skin itself, it cycles back to where it started.

That's the pattern seen in clinic, repeatedly. Steroids are meant to be short-term, but people are being put on them as infants and are still struggling with it 30 years on (or some become dependent within a short window).

OUR ROLE IS TO BREAK THAT CYCLE AND BUILD RESILIENT SKIN.

We look at the whole picture, including the skin barrier, microbiome, gut health, nervous system and nutrition, because healing your skin requires a completely different approach to masking symptoms.

HOW THIS GUIDE WORKS

Part One, Eczema: what it is, and why it may develop.

Part Two, Topical Steroids & TSW: what steroids do, why they can stop working, and what happens for some people when they come off them.

Part Three, Recovery: our approach, including CAP Therapy and HEALITE LED, and what to expect month by month.

If you're here for TSW, still read Part One. Everything we do in recovery is built on it.

Recovery isn't quick, and we won't pretend otherwise. But it is possible, and you don't have to work it out alone.

PART ONE

Eczema

What eczema is, why it may develop,
and the role of the skin barrier, microbiome
and immune system.

Understanding Eczema

LET'S START WITH THE BASICS.

Eczema is a common (yet complex) inflammatory skin condition. It involves:

- The skin barrier
- The immune system
- The microbiome
- The nervous system (chronic itch, inflammation and stress keep it switched on)
- Genetics
- Environmental influences - allergies / intolerances/ food sensitivities

For most people, eczema develops through a combination of these factors, not one single cause.

The Filaggrin Connection

Filaggrin is one of the most important proteins involved in skin barrier function. It helps:

- Hold skin cells together
- Reduce water loss
- Maintain hydration
- Protect against microbes, allergens and irritants

Research has identified filaggrin gene mutations as one of the strongest genetic risk factors for atopic eczema. When filaggrin is reduced, skin becomes drier, the barrier weakens, irritants enter more easily, and inflammation increases, which in turn disrupts the skin microbiome.

Genes create susceptibility. But the *environment* often decides whether that susceptibility becomes a flare.

Why Eczema Develops

ECZEMA IS RARELY CAUSED BY ONE THING: IT'S USUALLY A MIX OF:

- Genetic predisposition (reduced filaggrin)
- Early gut and skin microbiome development, birth & feeding style both influence which bacteria populate the gut early on
- Leaky gut, candida overgrowth or fungal involvement
- Medication use, including antibiotics
- Immune dysregulation
- Food sensitivities and allergens
- Environmental and urban lifestyle factors that reduce microbial exposure

Eczema in New Zealand

In Aotearoa, Māori and Pasifika experience significantly higher rates of eczema. Researchers point to a mix of possible contributing factors, genetics, shifts in traditional diets over recent generations, urbanisation and reduced everyday contact with soil and nature, housing quality, and access to care. This is an active area of research rather than a settled picture, but it's part of why we don't treat eczema as one-size-fits-all.

Histamine & Mast Cells: Why You're So Itchy

Many people with eczema experience elevated histamine activity, which can slow healing and leave skin more open to infection.

HISTAMINE CAN CONTRIBUTE TO:

- Itching
- Redness
- Flushing
- Burning
- Swelling
- Heat intolerance
- Increased sensitivity
- Slowed healing

Histamine is released by immune cells called **mast cells**, which act as environmental sensors. They can be activated by allergens, foods, stress, infections, inflammation and other environmental triggers.

Because so many factors can contribute to itch, we look beyond the skin itself when treating it. Some research suggests a low-histamine diet may be more effective for eczema than antihistamines alone.

The Role of Barrier Function

Many people with eczema already have reduced barrier function due to:

FILAGGRIN DEFICIENCY

CHRONIC INFLAMMATION

MICROBIOME DISRUPTION

ENVIRONMENTAL STRESSORS

When the barrier stays weak, irritants and allergens continue to enter the skin, creating a cycle of recurring inflammation.

This is why treating inflammation alone often isn't enough: *without addressing the barrier itself, the underlying cycle continues*. At Sol, we've built our approach around this very philosophy, treating the skin as a whole system, not just the symptoms in front of us.

CAN YOUR MICROBIOME RECOVER?

Your skin microbiome plays an important role in regulating inflammation and immune activity. Skin is home to a living ecosystem of bacteria, fungi and other microbes (both good and bad) and this ecosystem is part of the skin barrier itself.

Staphylococcus aureus, an unhelpful bacteria, is present in around 10% of the general population but found in up to 80% of people with eczema. It's not yet clear whether staph causes eczema, but we *do* know it can trigger flares and infection.

CAP Therapy, alongside bio-therapeutic skincare, is one of our key tools against staph overgrowth. We'll look at this treatment in more detail in Part Three.

SIGNS OF INFECTION

Medical intervention has an important place here, particularly if you notice:

- Fever or flu-like symptoms
- Pain or swollen lymph nodes (neck, jaw, underarms or groin)
- Redness spreading quickly, or blisters with yellow oozing

If you notice these signs, please seek medical advice. We can continue supporting your skin with CAP Therapy alongside medical treatment if needed.

PART TWO

Topical Steroids & TSW

Everything up to here has been about eczema itself.

This section is about what happens when topical steroids come into the picture: what they do, why they can stop working, and what some people experience when they come off them.

TSW is its own condition.
You can have eczema and never experience it.

What topical steroids do

Topical steroids are designed to suppress inflammation, and they're highly effective at reducing redness, itching, swelling and irritation. That's why they're the first thing offered for eczema, and for getting people through an acute flare, they do the job.

Symptom control vs healing

What steroids don't necessarily do is address what's driving the condition in the first place. Inflammation may be suppressed while the underlying skin barrier stays compromised.

If the drivers that are causing eczema are still present, symptoms return once steroid use is reduced or stopped.

When skin becomes reliant on suppression

Over time, some people find symptoms return faster, stronger steroids are needed, larger areas require treatment, or relief doesn't last as long. This doesn't necessarily mean the eczema is getting worse. It may mean the skin has become reliant on ongoing suppression rather than genuine recovery.

Why do steroids seem to stop working?

One of the questions we hear most often: if steroids work, why do I keep needing stronger ones?

The answer is not as simple as 'the steroids stopped working.'

A few things are usually happening at once: receptor desensitisation (steroid receptors on cells stop responding as effectively), genetic downregulation (how your body processes the drug changes over time), or the underlying condition getting worse itself.

This is why we treat the body as a whole, rather than the skin in isolation. And it's something worth addressing even while still using steroids, well before the point where they stop working altogether.

Understanding Topical Steroid Withdrawal (TSW)

TSW, also known as 'red skin syndrome' or 'topical steroid addiction', refers to the symptoms some people experience after reducing or stopping prolonged topical steroid use. (Though, in clinic, we're now starting to see clients experiencing TSW after shorter-term use of steroids as well.)

TSW happens when your skin reacts badly to stopping topical steroids, usually after using a medium-to-strong one for three months or longer. Symptoms include burning, itching, and red, inflamed skin.

Many health professionals think two things are going on: your skin's blood vessels have gotten so used to the steroid that when you stop, they overreact and flood with blood (causing the redness), and your skin's protective barrier is compromised, leaving it raw and reactive. It usually shows up on the face first, but can spread anywhere.

HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM AN ECZEMA FLARE?

An eczema flare is driven by the things we covered in Part One, the barrier, the microbiome, the immune system, and environmental and dietary triggers. TSW is a reaction to stopping the steroid itself.

That's why TSW can look quite different from an initial eczema breakout, and why some people are in withdrawal without realising it. Others end up here simply because steroids have stopped working: over time, skin can stop responding to medical treatment, and withdrawal becomes the only path forward.

SYMPTOMS MAY INCLUDE:

- Painful or burning skin, redness
- Desquamation, flaking, shedding or peeling, sometimes widespread
- Swelling (oedema) and pins-and-needles sensations (paraesthesia)
- Skin thinning/thickening and wrinkling
- Weeping or pus-filled papules, nodules and steroid-induced dermatitis
- Sleep disturbance, fatigue, tremors or shivering
- Hair loss (alopecia)
- Mood changes, including low mood

Barrier dysfunction makes all of the above harder to manage.

Treating the skin topically, through microbiome-supportive skincare, barrier repair, and targeted supplementation, matters here. Without this, flares tend to continue and skin can end up back where it started.

(We do this slowly, starting with intervals to start supporting the skin from within.)

Patterns We See

RED MASK SYNDROME

Redness across the face in a mask-like pattern.



RED SLEEVE SIGN

The arm goes red everywhere except the palm, like you're wearing a red glove that stops at the wrist.



HEADLIGHT SIGN

The skin around your nose and mouth stays pale while everything else around it goes red, so those areas "light up" pale by contrast.



ELEPHANT WRINKLES

Skin loses elasticity and gets loose, crepey folds, especially at joints (elbows, knees).



Withdrawal, your nervous system and the stress axis

Living with chronic inflammation, itching and stress takes a toll. Over time, your nervous system can become increasingly sensitised. Steroid use also suppresses the stress axis (HPA axis), which can leave the body with very little capacity to cope with stress, whether or not steroids are still in use. This needs to be part of treatment, not an afterthought.

Depending on what you need, we may refer you to additional support. We've also built the Sol Studio environment to help take some of that stress off your shoulders, a space and a team to help you through it, not just a place to treat symptoms.

Recovery timelines

When it comes to recovery, everyone is different.

Many people cycle through changing symptoms and flares for six months or more, but with expert help, recovery is faster and less painful (so you're in the right place!).



Where Sol Comes In

We don't see eczema as an inflammation or genetic problem that can't be helped.

We see it as a *barrier, microbiome, immune and nervous system condition*. And while reducing inflammation is important, long-term improvement often requires:

BARRIER REPAIR

MICROBIOME SUPPORT (SKIN AND GUT)

NUTRITIONAL SUPPORT

STRESS MANAGEMENT

NERVOUS SYSTEM REGULATION

CONSISTENT TREATMENT AND MONITORING

Our goal is not simply to suppress symptoms. Our goal is to help create an environment where the skin can become stronger, more resilient and less reliant on ongoing intervention.

Are you ready to make a change?

Preparing for Recovery

Whether and when to stop steroids is a decision to make for yourself, ideally in conversation with your health provider.



BEFORE BEGINNING WITHDRAWAL, WE ENCOURAGE:

- Medical guidance, where appropriate
- Nutritional support, including Sol supplement recommendations
- Functional stool and blood testing with a functional doctor or registered practitioner.
(Standard reference ranges for nutrient levels are often set very low, sitting at the low end of "normal" may be acceptable for someone without a chronic skin condition, but it's a different picture when your skin is actively trying to heal. We work with practitioners we trust and can support you alongside them.)
- Stress management
- Sleep optimisation
- Skin barrier support, including openness to bio-therapeutic skincare

Nutritional Foundations For Recovery

Whole-food nutrition forms the foundation of recovery. These are the essentials we recommend you take throughout treatment:

OSMOSIS REGENERATE

Many people with eczema run low in vitamin D, and Regenerate is formulated with vitamin D alongside other skin-supporting nutrients

VITAMIN D

Regulates the immune system and supports barrier repair

AMINO ACIDS

The building blocks for new skin and collagen

HEALTHY FATS & VITAMINS A, D, E AND K

Healthy fats & vitamins A, D, E and K support repair, reduce inflammation, and maintain a strong barrier

LIVER SUPPORT

Helps process hormones, medications and inflammatory by-products, supporting overall healing

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Reduces inflammation, supports the skin barrier, and nourishes skin cells from within. It takes around four months to reach the skin. Choose a high-quality, purity-tested source to avoid heavy metals from unrefined fish oil. (We recommend Designs For Health OmegaAvail - HI Po)

ZINC

Supports skin repair, wound healing and immunity. (We recommend Designs For Health Tri-Zinc Supreme)

PROTEIN (FOUND IN OSMOSIS REGENERATE)

Supports tissue repair and barrier rebuilding.

Note: there are loads of different brands and options when it comes to supplement and as part of your treatment plan at Sol, we'll help you find the right ones for you.

KEY TREATMENT

CAP Therapy

Cold Atmospheric Plasma (CAP) Therapy is the foundation of our eczema and TSW recovery programmes here at Sol.

CAP Therapy uses cool plasma energy, a controlled burst of reactive oxygen species (ROS) and reactive nitrogen species (RNS) to activate the skin's immune system at a cellular level. Rather than suppressing symptoms, it works by supporting the skin's own healing processes. This makes it ideal for conditions where the skin barrier is repeatedly damaged and needs to be rebuilt.

CAP THERAPY

CAP is increasingly being explored across wound care, dermatology and regenerative medicine, for its ability to support multiple aspects of skin recovery at once, rather than targeting a single symptom.

If you're experiencing eczema and topical steroid withdrawal, you might be up against several challenges at the same time:

- Barrier dysfunction
- Chronic inflammation
- Impaired healing
- Microbiome imbalance (overgrowth of staph bacteria)
- Increased infection risk

CAP addresses many of these factors simultaneously.

While it is not a cure for eczema or topical steroid withdrawal, it can be a powerful tool to support the body's natural healing processes and improve the environment in which healing occurs.

At Sol Studio, we combine CAP Therapy with nutritional support, microbiome support, skincare, stress management and ongoing guidance to create a comprehensive recovery programme designed to support long-term skin resilience.

WHAT IS PLASMA?

Plasma is the fourth state of matter, alongside solid, liquid and gas. When energy is added to a gas, it becomes plasma. Cold Atmospheric Plasma is a low-temperature form that can be applied safely to living tissue, without thermal damage.

HOW CAP WORKS

CAP generates Reactive Oxygen Species (ROS) and Reactive Nitrogen Species (RNS), molecules that already exist naturally in the body and play a key role in healing and cellular communication. Applied in controlled amounts, they act as biological messengers, prompting the skin to repair itself more effectively.

What CAP supports

CELLULAR COMMUNICATION

CAP improves communication between cells. These signalling molecules help coordinate tissue repair, immune regulation, wound healing and cellular regeneration.

WOUND HEALING

Research suggests CAP supports faster wound closure, improved tissue repair, increased blood flow and enhanced cellular activity, important in eczema and TSW, where the skin barrier is repeatedly damaged.

MICROBIAL BALANCE

CAP shows antimicrobial activity against a wide range of microorganisms, including *Staphylococcus aureus*, which is often elevated on eczema skin and can worsen inflammation. By breaking up staph colonies, CAP helps the skin rebuild a healthier, more diverse microbiome, without relying solely on antibiotics.

INFLAMMATION REGULATION

Inflammation is part of healing, but chronic or excessive inflammation causes damage. CAP may help regulate inflammatory signalling and reduce the ongoing cycle of flare and repair in chronic conditions.

BARRIER RECOVERY

Healthy skin depends on strong cell-to-cell connections, balanced hydration and effective barrier function. CAP supports several of the processes involved in repairing and regenerating compromised skin.

KEY TREATMENT

Healite LED

HEALITE LED supports cellular energy production, reduced inflammation, tissue repair and the healing response. Combined with CAP Therapy, it addresses both surface and deeper recovery processes, CAP treats surface inflammation while HEALITE works on repairing deeper cracks in the skin, so both layers heal at the same time.

HOW HEALITE WORKS

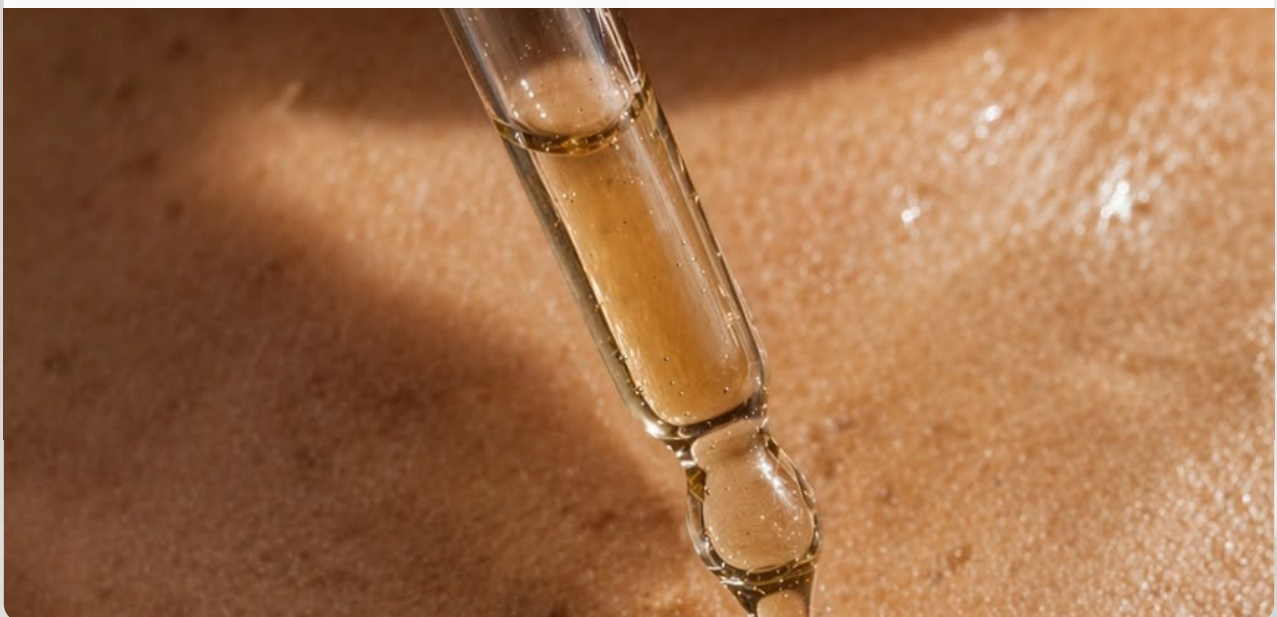
Every cell contains mitochondria, structures that produce energy in the form of ATP (Adenosine Triphosphate). ATP is required for tissue repair, cellular regeneration, immune function, protein synthesis and wound healing. When skin is chronically inflamed, injured or stressed, its energy demands rise significantly. Photobiomodulation supports these energy-producing systems, helping cells meet that demand.

SUPPORTING INFLAMMATION REGULATION

Inflammation is a normal part of healing, but when it becomes chronic it breaks down collagen and works against the skin's ability to repair, accelerating signs of ageing in the process. Research suggests photobiomodulation may help support a more balanced inflammatory response by influencing the cellular signalling pathways involved in inflammation and repair.

WHY IT'S SO EFFECTIVE FOR ECZEMA & TOPICAL STEROID WITHDRAWAL

Eczema and TSW often involve chronic inflammation, impaired barrier function, delayed healing, increased sensitivity and repeated tissue damage. CAP Therapy and HEALITE LED offer two different but complementary ways of supporting the body's natural healing processes.



And what about skincare?

Skincare is a big part of recovery, for eczema and for TSW.

It can feel daunting introducing new skincare during this time, which is why every product we use is backed by clinical research, and nothing is added to your routine without reason.

Our approach follows three stages: *protect, repair, rebuild*. Products are introduced slowly and in a specific order, based on where your skin is in recovery.

Depending on your skin's needs, this may include:

- Barrier-supportive skincare
- Probiotic technologies
- Live bacteria technologies
- Growth factors
- Stem-cell-derived technologies

The goal throughout is the same: support the skin's own ability to heal.

Optional Regenerative Support

To further support skin repair, you also have the option of adding **professional-strength human fibroblast-derived growth factor ampoules** to your CAP Therapy treatments.

*(It's a bit of a mouthful, but these ampoules are essentially **concentrated repair signals for your skin**, derived from human fibroblasts, added to your CAP Therapy treatment.)*

This optional support is highly recommended for clients with eczema, Topical Steroid Withdrawal (TSW), impaired skin barrier function or slow-healing skin, as it supports the skin's natural healing processes.

Looking for ongoing support between clinic visits, too? You can also get the same regenerative technology in a **medical-grade home serum**. Using this serum at home will give your skin consistent regenerative support as part of your daily skincare routine.

Like any other approach we recommend, these additional therapies are designed to **support your skin's own ability to repair**.

The Stages of Recovery

Recovery isn't linear. Most people move back and forth between 4 different stages before settling into lasting improvement.

- *Stage 1: Acute Withdrawal*
- *Stage 2: Cycling*
- *Stage 3: Rebuilding*
- *Stage 4: Resilience*

If you're wanting to come off steroids and heal your skin holistically, below is a rough indication of what you can expect and when.

Our [52-week skin recovery programme](#) (one we've designed specifically for eczema & TSW clients) is built to reflect this timeline.

	GOAL	COMMON SYMPTOMS
● MONTH 1	Stabilisation	Burning Redness Oozing Swelling Poor sleep
● MONTHS 2–3	Reduce inflammation and support barrier repair	Flare cycles Dryness Skin shedding Ongoing itching
● MONTHS 3–6	Recovery and rebuilding	Less burning Less oozing Improved healing
● MONTHS 6–9	Strengthening	Fewer flares Improved hydration Increased comfort
● MONTHS 9–12	Long-term maintenance	Greater stability Increased resilience Improved quality of life

Making it a (low tox) lifestyle

Your skin is exposed to thousands of substances every day, through air, food, skincare, and household items. You can't eliminate all of it, but you can reduce the load.

That's what "low-tox" means: minimising synthetic chemicals in the everyday environment. It's not about achieving perfection, but rather creating a healthier space that supports healing.

Eczema-free skin is a lifelong journey, not a quick fix. Instead of trying to change everything at once, simply choose one or two habits to improve, then continue chipping away over time.

Small changes, repeated consistently, often have the greatest long-term impact.

Low-tox lifestyle checklist

AIR QUALITY

- ☐ Use a HEPA air purifier, especially in the bedroom.
- ☐ Open windows regularly when outdoor air quality is good.
- ☐ Avoid smoking or vaping indoors.
- ☐ Use extractor fans when cooking and showering.
- ☐ Replace or clean heat pump and air-conditioning filters.

FRAGRANCE-FREE HOME

- ☐ Remove scented candles.
- ☐ Remove reed diffusers.
- ☐ Avoid plug-in air fresheners.
- ☐ Avoid incense.
- ☐ Choose fragrance-free laundry detergents.
- ☐ Choose fragrance-free cleaning products.
- ☐ Minimise perfumes and heavily fragranced personal care products.

DAMPNESS & MOULD

- ☐ Check your home for leaks.
- ☐ Repair damp areas ASAP.
- ☐ Remove visible mould safely.
- ☐ Use a dehumidifier if needed.
- ☐ Keep your home warm and well ventilated.

DUST & ALLERGENS

- ☐ Vacuum regularly using a HEPA-filter vacuum.
- ☐ Damp dust surfaces.
- ☐ Wash bedding weekly.
- ☐ Wash new clothing before wearing.
- ☐ Consider mattress and pillow protectors if dust mites are a known trigger.

LAUNDRY

- ☐ Avoid fabric softeners.
- ☐ Use an extra rinse cycle if sensitive to detergent residue.
- ☐ Wear breathable natural fibres where possible.

FOOD & KITCHEN

- ☐ Eat mostly whole, minimally processed foods.
- ☐ Reduce ultra-processed foods where possible.
- ☐ Wash fruit and vegetables.
- ☐ Avoid heating food in plastic containers.
- ☐ Use glass/stainless steel food containers if possible.

WATER

- ☐ Drink loads of clean water.
- ☐ Consider a water filter if needed.

EVERYDAY HABITS

- ☐ Spend time outside.
- ☐ Prioritise sleep.
- ☐ Move your body regularly.
- ☐ Manage stress.
- ☐ Continue making one small positive change each week.

Remember: progress over perfection!
Every positive change helps reduce your overall environmental load and creates a healthier foundation for your skin to heal.

Over To You

If you're battling eczema, you know
there's no miracle solution.

*But there **is** a path through.*

One we've walked with many clients before.

You need a plan that focuses on consistent treatment,
nutritional and nervous system support, and a
stronger microbiome and barrier. And we have the
knowledge & tools to help you every step of the way.

We'd truly love to help you experience all that's
waiting for you on the other side of eczema.

See you in the studio?

Salix

BOOK YOUR CONSULT