

Patient information

Treatment of Actinic Keratoses with Fluorouracil 5% (Efudix cream)

Dermatology Department - Aintree Hospital

What are Actinic Keratoses?

Actinic (or solar keratoses) are areas of sun damaged skin predominantly found on sun exposed parts of the body.

They are small brown or reddish patches and feel rough to the touch. They sometimes have a white scaly top.

They are usually harmless but there is a small risk they can progress to a form of skin cancer, for this reason they are treated.

What is Efudix cream and how does it work?

Efudix cream is a treatment for actinic keratoses it works by destroying the abnormal skin cells caused by years of sun damage without damaging normal skin.

Efudix cream can also be used as a treatment for other skin conditions such as, Bowen's disease and superficial basal cell carcinomas.

How do I use the cream?

The doctor may ask you to apply the cream to individual actinic keratoses or to larger areas.

You will need to look in the mirror and also feel your skin to find these areas (they feel rough).

You don't need gloves to apply the cream it can be applied with your fingertips.

You may find using a cotton bud useful when applying cream to small areas.

The total area of skin treated with Efudix at any one time should not exceed 23 x 23cm (9x9inches), this is approximately the size of a dinner plate.

How often do I apply the cream?

Week one and two	Apply Efudix cream thinly to any affected areas twice daily (morning and evening), then stop using Efudix
Week three and four	Apply 1% Hydrocortisone cream/ointment twice a day to any red, sore areas then stop using Hydrocortisone
Then	If there are any keratoses left repeat the treatment cycle as described above

There may be variations to the above regime, if so please use creams as prescribed by your Consultant

What are the side effects of this treatment?

A few days after starting treatment the treated area will become red and may be sore. This is a normal reaction and a sign that treatment is working.

Skin that doesn't appear to have keratoses may also become red and inflamed.

This is because Efudix cream also treats lesions from sun damaged areas that are not yet visible to the naked eye.

After stopping treatment you may find that your skin takes one to two months to heal completely.

Efudix will make the skin red and sore, this is a normal reaction.

However if your skin weeps or blisters during treatment, or is very sore, stop using Efudix cream and apply the steroid cream (Hydrocortisone) twice a day to these areas.

Your Dermatologist will advise you on further treatment at your next hospital appointment.

What are the alternatives to treatment with Efudix cream?

Cryotherapy

This involves freezing the lesion with liquid nitrogen and can be done in the outpatient department.

Surgical removal

This requires a local anaesthetic to numb the area; the lesion is then scraped or cut away and can result in a scar.

Photodynamic therapy

This involves treatment with a chemical cream followed by exposure to a particular wavelength of light. This treatment is not currently available at Aintree Hospital.

Important Do's and Do Not's

Do;

- Do ask for advice if you have any questions or are concerned about using the treatment.
- Do wash your hands thoroughly after using Efudix.
- Do check the expiry date of your Efudix cream.

Do Not;

- Do not use Efudix cream to treat any other skin condition.
- Do not use Efudix if you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant or are breastfeeding.
- Do not apply near the eyes, nostrils or mouth.
- Do not expose your skin to sunlight during treatment.
- Do not use if you are allergic (hypersensitive) to fluorouracil or any other ingredients in this medicine.
- Do not use too much cream and do not apply to open cuts. This may cause the cream to be absorbed into the blood and very rarely this can cause side effects.
- Do not use if you are having treatment with Brivudine or Sorivudine.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

Dermatology secretaries telephone numbers

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