

Efudix “old faithful”

Efudix (5-fluorouracil), also known as 5-FU) has been used for many years as an effective treatment for solar keratoses and Bowen’s disease. It is toxic to cancerous and pre-cancerous cells, but has little effect on normal undamaged skin.

How to take Efudix

Solar Keratosis treatment length with Efudix

Note that the duration of treatment many need to be varied depending on clinical response or side effects. The goal is to continue until the skin blisters and crusts. If the skin is cracked and bleeding it is time to stop.

Expected treatment times

Face, chest, arms, legs and scalp	Twice daily for 2 to 4 weeks
Lips	Twice daily for 1 to 2 weeks
Speed running arms and legs	Shave arm/leg, apply efudix at night after your shower, cover with gladwrap overnight. Remove gladwrap in the morning.
OFF LABEL treatment of Bowen's disease (early SCC skin cancer)	Twice daily for 6 weeks. Need to continue even if cracked and bleeding. Can take a days break here and there as required. THIS IS ONLY SUITABLE FOR SINGLE SPOTS.

Application instructions

1. Wash the skin to be treated using lukewarm water. Avoid soap which may sting or irritate your skin, especially as treatment progresses.
2. Pat dry the affected area.
3. Allow your skin to completely dry.
4. Apply a thin layer of cream to the affected area(s) twice a day, without a dressing, for the duration advised above. Do not continue further unless advised.
5. Use a non-metal applicator, cotton bud or a rubber glove to apply a thin film of cream to your affected skin. Use the smallest amount that can cover the treatment area.
6. Don’t allow the cream to contact mucous membranes, such as eyes, eyelids, nostrils and lips, unless we are specifically targeting these areas.
7. Do not apply to broken skin or open cuts as it may be absorbed into the bloodstream and may cause side effects.
8. Wash your hands carefully and thoroughly immediately after using the cream.
9. Do not cover the treated area unless advised.

Apply sunscreen 20 minute after morning application

Apply night-time dose at least 2 hrs before going to bed

The total area of skin treated with at any time should not exceed 500 cm² (approx.23 x 23cm).
Treat larger areas a section at a time.

Precautions

Efudix **MUST NOT** be used during pregnancy or while breastfeeding.

Efudix **MUST NOT** be used if you have dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) enzyme deficiency.

Where possible avoid sun exposure to the treated area both during treatment and while the skin is irritated and inflamed after treatment. Even untreated areas of the skin may be more sensitive to sunlight.

What to expect

Usual Course of events:

Step 1 Redness

Step 2 Stinging and itch

Step 3 Blistering and crusting

Step 4 Crusting and peeling

Step 5 Resolution

Occasional severe treatment effects occur – even after the first application which may lead to prolonged crusting, cracked skin and bleeding

This means a stronger response but is more painful and longer lasting

Can dampen down this effect by using strong steroid ointment e.g. clobetasol cream/diprosone ointment

The treated area while appear unsightly and may be uncomfortable during treatment and for up to 2 weeks after the course is completed.

Side effects and aftercare

Irritated skin may be itchy or painful. There may be a burning sensation, redness and ulcers or sores in the treated area. Sometimes these symptoms affect areas that did not previously have solar keratoses. This means that the ingredients are treating sun damaged skin that has not yet developed into solar keratoses or skin cancer.

Paraffin ointment/petroleum jelly (e.g. CeraVe healing balm, pawpaw ointment or Vaseline) can provide relief. For further relief store these treatments in the fridge.

For severe treatment effects e.g. pain responding to above treatments, concerning skin inflammation, cracked and bleeding skin OR a need to speed resolution of treatment effects a strong steroid like clobetasol can be used twice daily to the affected areas for 2-4 days. Severe treatment effect suggests the treatment has been extremely effective. Using a strong steroid will dampen this somewhat – however the treatment will still be effective and is encouraged if the side effects are too severe, especially if you are worried about scarring of the skin (**rare**).

Do not use antiseptics such as Betadine, as they tend to dry the skin and make irritation and pain worse. If you suspect that the skin has become infected, notify your doctor.

In unusual cases, more general side effects can occur. These include fever, dizziness, abdominal pain and cramps, diarrhoea and vomiting. If you experience any of these symptoms, stop using Efudix and let me know.

Storage

Store at room temperature