



## Field Treatment for Sun-Damaged Skin – 5-Fluorouracil (Efudex)

Information for patients

### What is 5-fluorouracil (Efudex)?

- Efudex is a topical chemotherapy that directly eliminates pre-cancerous and cancerous cells from the skin
- Efudex was effective at eliminating at least 75% of actinic keratoses in 74.7% of patients in a recent large randomized control trial. Multiple studies have shown Efudex to be the most effective of field treatments for actinic keratosis.

### How do I apply Efudex?

- Apply a thin layer of the cream atop all affected areas using your fingers or a Q-tip
- Avoid the eyelids and the corners of the mouth
- If the medication accidentally gets into the eyes, wash out thoroughly with clean water
- Wash your hands well with soap and water after application
- Repeat application twice a day 2-4 weeks or how long your doctor recommends

### What to expect:

Within a few applications, the treated area will become red and irritated. You may develop scaling and itching, and mild pain or tenderness to touch. Some people even develop small breaks in the skin (erosions). These changes are evidence that the cancerous cells are being treated, and you can expect the symptoms to last for the entire time you are using the treatment.

- If the treated area becomes very painful, or if you develop draining ulcers/sores, stop the medication and call your doctor
- Redness typically resolves within 2-3 weeks after treatment is completed. The skin left behind should be smooth and slightly pink.

### Other important information:

- Your skin will be more sensitive to the sun during and after treatment. Ensure proper use of sunscreen (SPF 30+) prior to sun-exposure to prevent further sun damage and sunburn.
- You may need repeat treatment in the future. Do not re-start treatment with this cream unless your doctor has explicitly instructed this.
- Please call our office with any questions or concerns (781)-591-4234



West, D and Aires, D. Treatment of Actinic Keratosis with Topical Fluorouracil. Am Fam Physician. 2010 May 15;81(10):1186-1188

### Our Office:

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### References:

Jansen, M., et al. (2019). Randomized trial of four treatment approaches for actinic keratosis. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 380(10), 935-946.  
Gupta, A.K., Paquet, M. (2013). Network meta-analysis of the outcome "participant complete clearance" in nonimmunosuppressed participants of eight interventions for actinic keratosis: A follow-up on a Cochrane review. *British Journal of Dermatology*, 169, 250-259.