

EFUDEX (5-FLUOROURACIL) THERAPY

Your provider has indicated Efudex (5-fluorouracil) as a treatment for your condition. Efudex is a cream that is FDA approved to treat actinic keratoses (precancerous lesions) and superficial basal cell cancer (BCC), a thin type of basal cell cancer. It may also be used to treat squamous cell cancer in situ (SCC-IS), a thin type of squamous cell cancer.

Actinic keratoses and skin cancer cells multiply at a faster rate than normal skin cells. Efudex is absorbed faster by abnormal cells and interferes with the ability of these abnormal cells to multiply.

This handout will help you understand the treatment course and know what to expect during and after treatment.

During Treatment

You will be applying Efudex to the areas checked below:

- Entire face, including ears
- Scalp without hair
- Behind ears and sides of the neck
- Arms (from elbows to wrists) and hands
- Other _____

You will be applying Efudex for the specified length of time checked below:

- 2 weeks
- 3 weeks
- at least 4 weeks, up to 10 weeks with follow-up visits every 2 to 4 weeks
- Other _____

Apply the medication twice a day (morning and evening). **Unless instructed, do not attempt to spot treat the individual lesions.** Use enough to cover the area with a thin layer. You may use your fingertips, gloves, or a non-metal applicator to apply Efudex. Be sure to wash your hands thoroughly after each application.

Be careful when applying near the nose, eyes, and mouth. Do not apply on eyelids.

You can expect your skin to slowly become red and crusted with a reaction similar to a bad sunburn. **This redness means that the expected reaction is occurring and the medication is working.** Side effects may include burning, stinging, redness, swelling, and peeling.

The amount of redness and crusting usually is related to the degree of your sun damage. Therefore, the length of time these symptoms last is different for every patient. On average, if using Efudex for actinic keratoses on the face for 2 weeks, expect to look thoroughly unpresentable for about 3 to 4 weeks total (a few days after you start treatment, and 10 to 14 days after your treatment ends). Some mild redness may still be present after that, but will diminish over time.

If using Efudex for actinic keratoses on the arms for 3 weeks, expect to be red about a week longer (4 to 5 weeks.)

Your skin will be more sensitive to light during your treatment. It is recommended to avoid direct sunlight exposure. A UVA/UVB, chemical-free, sensitive skin sunscreen needs to be applied prior to going outdoors during daylight hours, regardless of season or weather. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat for the face and long sleeves for the arms is also helpful.

Some optional items to help with discomfort include cold compresses, Aquaphor, or petroleum jelly. Do not apply cosmetics or any anti-itch creams during your treatment course.

If you develop a concerning lesion outside of the treatment area, please notify the clinic so the lesion can be examined. **Please do not apply Efudex to other areas without being instructed to do so.**

After Treatment

If you are being treated for actinic keratoses, you will have a follow-up appointment at the end of your course. At that time, if you have an excessive amount of redness or crusting, you may be given a steroid ointment to help reduce these symptoms.

If you are being treated for a skin cancer, you will be seen every 2 to 4 weeks during your treatment.

Please continue to wear a UVA/UVB sunscreen daily after your course to maintain your improvement.

Either discard or store any remaining Efudex in a safe location. This medication is extremely toxic to pets, especially dogs.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact us at 503-253-3910.