

Efudex[®] (5% Fluorouracil Cream) for Actinic Keratosis

What is actinic keratosis?

- Actinic keratosis (AK) are lesions that are caused by sun exposure. You may have small, scaly patches that can look tan, brown, or reddish-brown.
- AK are common.
- If you have AK, they should be treated to prevent skin cancer.

What is Efudex[®]?

- Efudex[®] is a cream made with 5% fluorouracil that treats abnormal skin cells like AK before they become cancer (precancerous cells).

How does Efudex[®] work?

- AK cells grow faster than healthy skin cells. Efudex[®] destroys the AK cells without harming your other skin cells.

How do I use Efudex[®]?

- Your dermatologist (skin doctor) will talk with you about how to use Efudex[®].
 1. Wash the affected area with soap and water.
 2. Dry the area.
 3. Put a thin layer of Efudex[®] on the affected area.
 - › **Do not** get Efudex[®] in your eyes, nose, or mouth. Be careful when you are using it on skin near these areas.
 4. Wash your hands well.
- Use Efudex[®] 2 times a day, or as instructed by your dermatologist.
- Most people need to use Efudex[®] for 2 to 4 weeks.
- If you miss a treatment, use Efudex[®] at your next scheduled time.
- **Do not** put Efudex[®] on other areas.

What will happen to my skin while using Efudex[®]?

- Your skin may become red, irritated, and scaly or swollen.

- Affected areas may be itchy, sore, or have a burning feeling. **This is normal. It means that the cream is working.** Keep treating the area, even if you have these symptoms. If you have large blisters, stop treating the area and call the Dermatology nursing line.
- You can use a barrier (like Vaseline®) on treated areas to protect them and to help with any discomfort.
- Protect treated areas from the sun and use sunscreen 1 hour after using Efudex®.
- When you are done treatment and have stopped using Efudex®, your skin will start to heal itself. It can take up to 2 months for your skin to fully heal.

What if the treatment is too uncomfortable?

- If you are using Efudex® for the first time, start with a small area.
- More severe (very bad) areas of AK may cause stronger symptoms after treatment.
- If you find your skin is too irritated, please call the Dermatology nursing line.

Call the Dermatology nursing line if you have any of these signs of a possible infection:

- › Red streaks
- › Yellow discharge (pus)
- › More soreness

If you cannot reach the nurse, call your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or go to a walk-in clinic.

Please also call the Dermatology nursing line if:

- › You are not sure what area you should be treating
- › You have any other questions

Dermatology nursing line:

- › Phone: 902-473-7194

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

*Prepared by: Dermatology Clinic, QE II
Designed and Managed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services*