Department of Urology

Imiquimod (Aldara 5%) cream for penile cancer

This leaflet tells you about the treatment that has been recommended for you by your doctor. Imiquimod (Aldara) cream is a treatment for your condition. It is a medicine which is used to treat superficial pre-malignant/pre-cancerous skin lesions.

Your medicine
It is used to treat skin condition such as growths of the skin (Ketatoses) and some simple skin cancers, and other skin conditions which may develop into cancer.

How does it work?
Imiquimod (Aldara) works by destroying cancerous and pre-cancerous cells in the skin. If you have pre-cancerous or a small early stage cancer on the foreskin or end of your penis, your specialist doctor can prescribed Imiquimod cream for you to apply to the abnormal area. The cream kills only cancer cells near the surface of the skin; it is not used to treat deeper cancers. Imiquimod can be absorbed into the body even though it is prescribed for skin problems. When you first start to use the cream it is likely that you may get a skin reaction on the area of the skin you are treating such as on the penis. It is normal for this to happen.

Side effects
You should always read the leaflet insert that accompanies the cream. Many of the undesirable effects of Imiquimod cream are due to its local action on your skin. Local skin reactions can be a sign that the drug is working as intended.

Very common: the treated skin may be slightly itchy.

Common: pain, burning, irritation or redness. If the skin reaction becomes too uncomfortable during treatment, speak to your specialist nurse, key worker or doctor. He or she may advise you to stop applying the Imiquimod cream for a few days. If there is pus (discharge) or other suggestions of infection, discuss this with your clinical nurse specialist or doctor. Apart from reactions in the skin, other effects include swollen glands, back pain, head ache and joint pain. Painkillers such as paracetamol usually help with any discomfort.

How to use your cream
The pharmacy label on your medicine tells you how often you should apply it. This is the dose your doctor has decided you should use. You should not change the dose of your medicine unless you are told to do so by your consultant or doctor.

Before applying Imiquimod cream, you should wash the treatment area with mild soap and dry thoroughly. Apply the cream to the treatment area including 1cm of the surrounding skin and rub in until it has vanished. Sachets should not be re-used once opened. Apply the cream before normal sleeping hours and leave on the skin for approximately 8 hours. You should always wash...
your hands when you have applied the cream. After this period it is essential that Imiquimod cream is removed with mild soap and water. The usual direction for Imiquimod cream is Monday to Friday (do not use the cream at the weekends). Use the cream for 6 weeks. Do not cover/bandage the area which is being treated. Do not share your medicine with other people. It may not be suitable for them and may cause them harm.

**Taking other medicines**
Please tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are taking or have recently taken any other medicines, including those obtained without a prescription.

**General advice/information**
Depending on the affected area of the penis, for example, if this is on the under side of the shaft on the penis, it may be necessary to apply a simple barrier cream such as Sudocream to the skin of the scrotum to ensure this does not become sore from the cream being applied to the penis. Applying a barrier cream to the scrotum should protect it from the Imiquimod cream. Whilst you are using the Imiquimod cream we would recommend that you use a condom during sexual intercourse.

**Contacts**
If you have any other general worries when you are at home with regards to your Imiquimod cream treatment, please contact one of your key workers, Macmillan Urology Clinical Nurse Specialists:

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<th>Name</th>
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**Follow-up appointments**
You will be given a follow-up appointment to return to the clinic so that your doctors can assess the effect of your treatment, and to discuss further treatment/management of your care with you. If you have any concerns about the treatment and want to discuss these in between your follow-up appointments please contact your specialist nurse or key worker whose contact numbers are above.
If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

For more information about The Christie and our services, please visit www.christie.nhs.uk or visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford.