

Urology department

Imiquimod (Aldara 5%) cream for penile cancer

Your medicine

Your doctor has recommended Imiquimod (Aldara 5%) cream as a treatment for your condition. It is a medicine which is used to treat superficial pre-malignant skin conditions which may develop into cancer.

How does it work?

Imiquimod 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 prescribe Imiquimod cream for you to apply to the normal 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 which accompanies the cream. Many of the undesirable effects of Imiquimod cream are due to its local action on your skin. Local 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. They may advise you to stop applying Imiquimod cream for a few days. If there is pus (discharge) or other signs of infection, discuss this with your specialist nurse or doctor. Other common side effects include swollen glands, back pain, headache and joint pain. Painkillers such as paracetamol usually help with any discomfort.

How to use the 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 it 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 about 8 hours it is essential that Imiquimod cream is removed with mild soap and water. The usual direction for Imiquimod cream is to use it Monday to Friday only



(do not use the cream at weekends). Use the cream for 6 weeks. Do not cover or 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 area of the penis affected, for example, if this is on the underside of the shaft of the penis, it may be necessary to apply a simple barrier cream such as Sudocrem 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 prevent this. 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 about your treatment with Imiquimod cream, please contact one of your key workers, the Macmillan urology clinical nurse specialists:

Jane Booker - **0161 446 8018**

Steve Booth - **0161 918 2369**

Sharon Capper - **0161 446 3856**

Helen Johnson - **0161 918 7000**

Cath Pettersen - **0161 918 7328**

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 on the numbers 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.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact **the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net**

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week