

IMIQUIMOD (Aldara, Zyclara)

Aldara (Imiquimod) is an immune response modifier, it works from within by activating your body's own immune system to treat the disease. Imiquimod is mainly used to treat actinic keratoses (pre-cancerous growths), some skin cancers (certain BCC's and SCC's), genital warts and molluscum.

How to use it:

Aldara (Imiquimod) comes in boxes of 12 individual sachets or foil packs. Originally Imiquimod was used for treatment of genital warts. To prevent contamination the FDA mandated that each sachet was used only once. Although the formal recommendation are unchanged, when Imiquimod is used for treatment of non-genital skin lesion cross-contamination is unlikely, and using each pocket only once is costly (average cost for Imiquimod 12 pack is over \$500) and unnecessary. Many patients get two, three and four applications from a single foil pack.

Suggested directions:

1. Make a small pin hold in a corner of the foil pack.
2. Squeeze out a tiny amount of cream.
3. Rub well into treatment area with a finger and leave on overnight.
4. Fold over packet edge and secure with paper clip. Store in a cool place.

The above directions are simple, frugal, and allow you to use the product more economically.

During the therapy:

After a few days, the areas treated with Aldara (Imiquimod) will become inflamed. The most common side effects may include itching, burning, redness, ulceration (sores), scabbing, flaking and pain at the site of cream application. These reactions indicate that the cream is likely to be effective. If there is no inflammation, Imiquimod is unlikely to clear the lesions. In some patients, surrounding untreated areas also become inflamed but this will settle when treatment is discontinued.

Over time the area may develop a thick scab; to prevent skin fissures (skin cracks), apply Vaseline a couple of times a day.

Allow at least 1-2 hours between the application of Aldara and applying any topical products (i.e. sunscreen, Vaseline, moisturizer).

If you develop a severe reaction with black scabs and ulceration, stop applying the cream and arrange to see your doctor as soon as possible.

Rare side effects:

These are unusual, but may include flu-like symptoms, such as low- grade fever, fatigue, headache, nausea, diarrhea and muscle pain. These are generally mild and may be treated with Tylenol. However, if they are troublesome, stop applying Imiquimod cream and contact your doctor. Enlarged lymph nodes can rarely appear in sites near the treated area. The systemic side effects should resolve within a few days of stopping treatment. They may also resolve with continuing treatment.

Length of Treatment will depend on the frequency of use, the area treated and an individual's response to the agent.

Final Results

Healing after treatment is usually excellent. In spite of the marked inflammation there is rarely any permanent mark at the treatment site.