

Efudix/Calcipotriol.

What is Efudix/Calcipotriol?

Efudix and Calcipotriol are two prescription skin products that when used in combination are shown to treat precancerous skin conditions such as Actinic Keratosis. Their individual properties are outlined below. When used in combination it has been shown that the treatment course can be reduced from the 4-6 week course for Efudix alone to 4 days with similar effect. This shorter course makes it easier for patients to comply with the treatment course and get the results they need.

What is Efudix?

Topical fluorouracil 5% cream is often abbreviated to 5-FU. The trade name in New Zealand is Efudix and it is a prescription medicine. The active ingredient (fluorouracil) in Efudix interferes with a cell's ability to reproduce. The precancerous skin cells multiply more frequently than normal cells. As a result, they absorb the medicine faster than the surrounding healthy cells. This is how it can destroy the abnormal cells while having less effect on healthy normal cells which also heal much more effectively than the abnormal cells. It destroys sun-damaged skin cells, so the skin appears smoother and more youthful and has less chance of developing skin cancer. Traditionally treatment courses have lasted 4-6 weeks and can be difficult to complete due to the duration or the rash and pain experienced.

What is Calcipotriol?

Calcipotriol is a vitamin-D derivative, about 1% as powerful as the natural hormone calcitriol (also known as 1,25 dihydroxycholecalciferol). Calcipotriol is available as an ointment, cream and scalp solution called Daivonex commonly used in Psoriasis. Calcipotriol is an antiproliferative, reducing the abnormal growth of skin cells that occurs in psoriasis and actinic keratosis, and it induces cell differentiation, normalising skin growth and reducing cancer development.

How effective is Efudix combined with Calcipotriol?

The combination of Efudix and Calcipotriol is a relatively new treatment with developing evidence but it appears to be both more effective and a shorter treatment course than traditional options. Studies show Calcipotriol plus Efudix versus Vaseline plus Efudix led to an 87.8% versus 26.3% mean reduction in the number of Actinic Keratosis in participants after a 4 day course.

What can I expect from the treatment?

Two distinct patterns of treatment reaction occur (a) worsening of the redness after the end of the treatment, with its peak on days 10-11, accompanied by peeling of the affected skin before complete resolution (delayed pattern); and (b) a gradual resolution of erythema immediately after the end of the treatment (fast pattern). 91% of the participants experience this "delayed reaction" with symptoms generally settling down by around 2 weeks.



If the reaction is causing you significant pain using a oral pain relief like paracetamol or ibuprofen can be effective. Local anaesthetic creams like Emlar can be applied to particularly sensitive areas such as the lips or nose. If your pain is not controlled by these measures please contact your Skin Cancer Doctor for advice.

Treatment Instructions:

- **Mixture:** The **2 creams** should be **mixed at a 1:1 ratio** in a small pottle. This can be provided if required.
- **Preparation:** Cleanse the treatment area with a gentle soapy water. Completely dry area with a towel.
- **Dose:** Apply the mixture **twice daily** (Morning and Night) for 5-10 days or until mild redness develops. Generally this is about **5 days on head and neck, 7 days on scalp and up to 10 days on torso and limbs.**
- **Location:** This treatment should be applied to sun damaged skin with evidence of sun damage with actinic keratosis. These locations will be identified by your treating clinician. These typically include the face, scalp, neck, chest, arms and legs.
- **Application:** Volume of application should be similar to that of sunscreen - **a thumbnail sized volume for an area about the size of your palm.** You should wash your hands after use.
- **Rash management:**
 - Applying Vaseline every 1-2 hours can keep skin protected and to speed healing.
 - Avoid UV exposure to treated areas until healed - these areas are extra sensitive and can make the reaction much more severe.

How long do the effects of a treatment course last?

The evidence suggests that actinic keratosis burden will be reduced for a period of 2-3 years following the application of a course of Efudix/Calcipotriol. During this period a patient's risk of developing Squamous Cell Carcinoma appears to be significantly reduced.

Can I use other skin products like moisturiser, suncream or make up?

Application of other skin products can cause irritation to broken or inflamed skin so are best avoided. That said 20minutes following application of the treatment you can apply skin products to unbroken skin if necessary. This treatment can increase sun sensitivity so use protection in the form of a hat and long sleeves if you are going out in the sun.

Do I need follow-up after completing a course of Efudix/Calcipotriol?

It is recommended you check in with your Skin Cancer Doctor 6 weeks after initiating a course of Efudix/Calcipotriol to review to results and see if any further treatment is required. Skin checks are highly recommended for patients receiving treatment courses with Efudix/Calcipotriol as by qualifying for treatment you are already in a high risk group for the development of skin cancers.

Top sun safety tips

- Protect your skin with clothing, and don't forget to wear a hat that protects your face, neck and ears, and a pair of UV protective sunglasses.
- When choosing a sunscreen look for a high protection SPF (SPF 15 or more) to protect against UVB, and the UVA circle logo to protect against UVA.
- Apply plenty of sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before going out in the sun and reapply every 2 hours and straight after swimming and towel-drying.

For further information contact your Skin Cancer Doctor for advice or review of any lesions of concern.