



SKIN CANCER DOCTORS

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## 5-Fluorouracil (Efudix) - Use Instructions

### Background:

Efudix is an anti-cancer drug (5 fluorouracil) in an ointment form. It is used to treat sun-damaged skin and 'thin' skin cancers. It will not work on 'thick' skin cancers. Any skin cancers that feel 'thick' need to be removed surgically.

Efudix attacks rapidly developing cells but tends to leave normal skin cells alone. Thus it can be used over a larger area (up to 500cm<sup>2</sup>) to treat a field of sun damaged skin, killing the abnormal cells and will leave the normal cells alone. It will even treat sun-damaged skin that is not visible yet. It is not to be used by pregnant women.

### Treatment Length:

- **Actinic keratosis i.e. sun damaged skin**  
apply twice daily for **three to four** weeks
- **Bowen's disease/SCC in situ:**  
apply twice daily for **eight** weeks

The Efudix is used until the skin is red and irritated.

### How to apply

Wash skin with water and dry. Apply the Efudix thinly with the tip of a finger. Wash hands thoroughly afterwards. The maximum area of skin that should be treated is 22cmx22cm. Take care when using Efudix close to the eyes, lips or opening of the nose. If it gets in the nose or eyes, wash it out. Efudix is best used in the winter when sun light levels are low as it reacts with sunlight which can cause a more severe reaction. Keep areas covered in Efudix out of the sun. **Do not use sunscreen or makeup while using Efudix.**

### What to expect

Areas treated with Efudix will become inflamed. The effects include itching, burning, redness, scabbing, flaking and pain. These reactions indicate that the cream is likely to be effective. 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.

### Monitoring

**After two weeks of treatment please email a photo of the treated area to Dr Christian at [christian@skincancerdoctors.co.nz](mailto:christian@skincancerdoctors.co.nz). Please tell him how long you have been applying the cream and how you are feeling. He will advise if any alteration to the usual treatment regime is required. You can expect a reply within 24 hours.**

### After using Efudix

At the end of the course of using Efudix, you may start applying a steroid cream such as Locoid to calm the redness and inflammation down. You may use this twice a day for the first week and then once daily at night for the second week. Please stop applying steroid cream after that. You may stop applying steroid cream sooner if the redness/irritation is better/manageable.

### Note

If you are concerned about your reaction to the cream or if you are unable to complete the prescribed treatment, please email a photo through to your doctor or get in touch with the clinic.

Following treatment it can take some months for the skin to return completely to normal. If you still have ongoing areas of rough scaly sun damaged skin or if you are otherwise concerned, please make an appointment for review.