

Imiquimod is an immune response modifier that works by stimulating the immune system to release a number of chemicals, which are important in fighting viruses and destroying cancer cells.

When used to treat skin cancers and pre-cancerous lesions it results in inflammation, which destroys the lesion. The active ingredient is taken up by the receptors of immune cells located in the epidermis, the outer and visible portion of skin. These receptors are more numerous in some individuals and skin lesions than in others resulting in a wide range of variability noted in the degree of inflammation.

Treatment can begin any time of year, as it is not photosensitizing and it is particularly useful for areas where surgery or other treatments may be difficult, complicated or otherwise undesirable, especially the face and lower legs.

How to use...

- ❖ Wash your hands before and after applying Imiquimod cream.
- ❖ Cut the packet and squeeze out a tiny amount of cream onto your fingertip. Apply this to the affected areas. If treating a small area, puncture the packet with a needle so dispense a tiny amount.
- ❖ The packet states that it is for single use. You can seal it using tape and store in a closed container. This will prevent the cream from drying out and can be used again.

What to expect...

Areas treated with Imiquimod will become inflamed. The effects include itching, burning, redness, ulceration (sores), scabbing, flaking and pain. These reactions indicate that the cream is likely to be effective. If there is no inflammation, Imiquimod is unlikely to clear the lesions. An exaggerated response may clear the skin lesion sooner than expected. In some patients, surrounding untreated areas also become inflamed but this will settle once treatment has been completed and you are no longer applying.

Call the doctor...

- ❖ If you develop a severe reaction with black scabs and ulceration, stop applying the cream and arrange an appointment as soon as possible.
- ❖ If you have been applying the cream for several days but are not having a reaction, you should call the office. A decision will be made as to whether or not continuation of treatment with Imiquimod is appropriate. A new course of treatment may need to be discussed.

Possible side effects...

Flu-like symptoms may develop (fever, fatigue, headache, nausea, diarrhea, muscle pain) but are generally mild and should resolve on their own during treatment or shortly after completion. These symptoms are an indicator that the medication is working.

Start treatment: _____

Apply to: _____

Stop treatment: _____

Rx: _____

Resume treatment: _____

Stop treatment: _____