



Provincial Health Services Authority

For the Patient: Fluorouracil for skin (topical)

Other names: 5-Fluorouracil, 5FU, EFUDEX®

- **Fluorouracil** (flure oh yoor' a sill) is a drug that is used to treat **actinic keratoses**. This is a pre-cancerous skin growth caused by the sun. Fluorouracil reacts against the pre-cancerous sun-damaged skin but does not usually affect normal skin. It is a cream which is applied to the skin.
- Tell your doctor if you have ever had an unusual or **allergic reaction** to fluorouracil or to capecitabine (XELODA®) before using fluorouracil.
- It is important to **use** fluorouracil cream exactly as directed by your doctor. Make sure you understand the directions. Do not use fluorouracil cream more often or longer than directed by your doctor.
- It is important to have **multiple treatments** with fluorouracil cream. The lesions might look healed after a single course, but may come back. Treatment is usually continued until the skin no longer reacts to the fluorouracil cream by reddening. This shows that the damaged areas of skin have been completely removed.
- Even if **no irritation** develops, therapy should be continued for at least three weeks.
- **Wash** the affected area and dry completely before applying fluorouracil cream.
- **Apply** fluorouracil cream in a thin layer over the entire affected area. It can be applied using a nonmetal applicator, a glove or your fingertips. If you apply fluorouracil cream using bare fingertips, wash your hands thoroughly, immediately afterwards. Do not cover the treated areas with a bandage or dressing unless your doctor tells you to.
- **Do not apply** to the eyelids, eyes, nose, or mouth. If these areas come in contact with fluorouracil cream, rinse thoroughly with plenty of water.
- **Do not let children or pets touch or lick your skin where the drug is applied.**
- If you **miss an application** of fluorouracil cream, apply it as soon as you can if it is within 12 hours of the missed application. If it is over 12 hours since your missed application, skip this one and go back to your usual dosing times.
- The **drinking of alcohol** (in small amounts) does not appear to affect the safety or usefulness of fluorouracil cream.

- Fluorouracil cream may cause **sterility** in men and **menopause** in women. If you plan to have children, discuss this with your doctor before being treated with fluorouracil cream.
- Fluorouracil cream may damage sperm and may harm the baby if used during pregnancy. It is best to use **birth control** while being treated with fluorouracil. Tell your doctor right away if you or your partner becomes pregnant. Do not breast feed during treatment.
- **Tell** your doctor, dentist, and other health professionals that you are being treated with fluorouracil cream before you receive any treatment from them.
- **Store** fluorouracil cream out of the reach of children, at room temperature, away from heat, light and moisture.

Side effects are listed in the following table in the order in which they may occur. Tips to help manage the side effects are included.

SIDE EFFECTS	MANAGEMENT
<p>Your damaged skin usually becomes red and irritated, and peels. This usually occurs after 1-2 weeks of use. This effect may last for several weeks after you stop treatment with fluorouracil cream.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to apply fluorouracil cream for 2 weeks after the irritation appears, or as directed by your doctor. • If the inflammation becomes very severe, stop using fluorouracil cream and contact your healthcare team. • If the irritated areas become infected apply POLYSPORIN® ointment two times daily (available from your community pharmacy). • For any other problems contact your healthcare team.
<p>Your skin may sunburn easily while using fluorouracil cream and for several weeks after you stop using fluorouracil cream.</p>	<p>To help prevent sunburn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid direct sunlight. • Wear a hat, long sleeves and long pants or skirt outside on sunny days. • Apply a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30. <p>Tell your healthcare team if you have a severe sunburn or skin reaction such as itching, rash, or swelling after sun exposure.</p> <p>Refer to <i>Your Medication Sun Sensitivity and Sunscreens*</i> or the <i>BC Health Guide</i> for more information.</p>

