

Efudex

I. Definition:

Efudex is an anti-cancer drug which has the chemical name 5-fluorouracil. Efudex is used to treat actinic keratoses. An actinic keratosis is a precancerous skin lesion caused by sun damage. Actinic keratoses feel rough and are sometimes scaly. Actinic keratoses are not skin cancer, but they often turn into skin cancer.

II. Causes:

- Repeated, prolonged sun exposure causes skin damage which may develop into an actinic keratosis.
- The sun damage responsible for an actinic keratosis has usually occurred years before the lesion forms.

III. Prevention:

- Sun damage is permanent and irreversible. You should put on sun-screen or moisturizer with an SPF of 30 or higher every day before leaving the house.

IV. Treatment:

- When there are many keratoses, a useful treatment is Efudex (5-fluorouracil) cream. The medication is applied to the involved area twice a day. This is continued for eight to twelve weeks, depending on the response. The treated area becomes red, raw and irritated. Healing starts when the Efudex is stopped. You can apply Vaseline for dryness. Make sure that the medication has been completely washed off before applying the Vaseline. Cool compresses can be used to soothe the area. Sometimes a second medicine, hydrocortisone cream, is applied to the area after the Efudex is stopped.
- While using Efudex avoid makeups or facial products with alcohol, as this can cause irritation.
- New actinic keratoses and skin cancers often arise at or near the location where old ones have been treated. This is because the skin cells nearby have just as much damage as the ones already treated.



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