

Efudex

1. What is Efudex?

Efudex (5-fluorouracil) is a topical chemotherapy cream prescription cream used to treat sun-damaged skin, specifically actinic keratoses (AKs) and superficial skin cancers. Efudex works by targeting and destroying abnormal cells so that healthy skin can regenerate in their place.

CONTRAINDICATIONS: Do not use it if you have dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase deficiency, pregnancy, or breastfeeding.

2. How to Use Efudex

- **ACTINIC KERATOSIS:** FIELD treatment - Covering a whole area of skin. Usually Efudex is applied twice daily to affected areas for 2-4 weeks. But you may be directed to apply it differently by your doctor.
- **SUPERFICIAL SKIN CANCER:** TARGET treatment - For these cases, efudex is applied twice daily for 4 - 6 weeks to the affected spot and a little bit around the spot. May continue under the direction of your doctor up to 10 to 12 weeks to ensure complete resolution of the lesion.
- **YOU WILL EXPERIENCE A SKIN REACTION, this is NORMAL and EXPECTED.** This treatment specifically targets pre-cancerous cells and sun-damaged skin, but has little effect on normal skin. In general, skin with more sun damage will have a more intense reaction.
 - For **ACTINIC KERATOSIS:** Treat for 2-4 weeks. You know to stop when there is severe irritation or skin breakdown is starting.
 - For **SUPERFICIAL SKIN CANCER:** If severe irritation or skin break down occurs, give it a few days break and apply Vaseline. Once the skin has healed, you can resume and complete the treatment.
- Treatment will result in healthier, smoother skin with a reduced risk of skin cancers.
- **REDNESS, SCALING, TENDERNESS, and OOZING** are normal responses. The cream is being taken up by the abnormal cells that are dying.
- Full healing may take up to a month post treatment.

3. Common Prescriptions for Efudex

- **ACTINIC KERATOSIS:** Efudex 5% cream apply to affected areas twice daily for 2 to 4 weeks. May extend up to 8 weeks for lesions on the trunk, lower limbs, hands or forearms.
- **SUPERFICIAL BCC:** Efudex 5% cream apply to the affected area twice daily for 3 to 6 weeks. May continue up to 10 to 12 weeks to ensure complete resolution of the lesion.
- **SCC in situ (off label):** Efudex 5% cream apply to the affected area twice daily for 3 to 4 weeks.

4. How to apply

- Before applying Efudex, gently wash the treatment area with mild soap and lukewarm water, then pat the skin dry with a soft towel. Avoid scrubbing or using harsh cleansers.
- Make sure your skin is completely dry before applying the cream. Using clean **fingertips** or a **non-metal** applicator, apply a thin layer of Efudex to the affected area, just enough to lightly cover the skin. Do not rub it in aggressively.
- Wash your hands thoroughly after each application unless you are treating your hands.
- Do not apply Efudex to broken skin, open wounds, or near the eyes, mouth, or nostrils.
- Let the cream absorb fully before dressing or going outdoors. It's best to apply Efudex at the same time each day to maintain consistent treatment.

5. Aftercare

- Once you've completed your Efudex treatment, your skin will begin to heal — often starting as pink, tender, and slightly raw. This is completely normal and part of the renewal process.
- Keep the area **clean, moisturized, and protected**. Use a gentle, fragrance-free moisturizer (like CeraVe, Vanicream, or plain petroleum jelly) to soothe dryness and support healing. Avoid picking or scrubbing the skin as it flakes or peels — let it shed naturally.
- Stay out of the sun as much as possible, and apply a **broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen** daily once the skin begins to re-epithelialize (usually 5–7 days after stopping treatment).
- Follow up with your doctor as planned to review your progress and assess for residual lesions.

IMPORTANT: You must use strict **SUN PROTECTION** during treatment and until skin is healed.