

## Imiquimod Cream for Vulval Conditions

### What are the aims of this leaflet?

This leaflet is to help you understand more about imiquimod cream, and why it has been recommended for you.

### What is imiquimod and how does it work?

Imiquimod is a cream that activates the immune system when it is applied to the skin. The immune system then recognises abnormal cells and causes inflammation which removes them. We recommend a 5% cream (trade name Aldara). There is also a weaker strength cream 3.75% (trade name Zyclara).

### What conditions do we treat with imiquimod cream?

We use imiquimod on the vulval skin to treat vulval intra-epithelial neoplasia (VIN), genital viral warts and extramammary Paget's disease.

### Will imiquimod improve my skin condition?

In studies, about 45% of women will have a complete response with no remaining pre-cancerous changes when imiquimod is used for VIN. There is less data for use in Paget's disease, but the response appears to be around 70%. If imiquimod works, the skin usually gets red and sore before it gets better. This redness and soreness usually settles about 2 weeks after the course of treatment is finished.

### How often should I use imiquimod cream?

We advise using the cream three times a week for a total of 12 weeks.

### How should I use the cream?

You should apply the imiquimod cream at night and wash it off in the morning. It should be on the skin for 8 hours. Make sure the skin has been cleaned with water or a soap substitute and dried before applying the cream. Cut a corner of the sachet and use a finger to apply the cream in a thin layer to the affected skin. Ask the clinic staff if you are unsure exactly where the skin abnormalities are. The cream should go over the edge of the affected area by about 1cm so that it covers some normal skin. Do not cover the area after the imiquimod is applied. Avoid applying any other creams to the skin until at least 8 hours have passed and the imiquimod is washed off. After the cream has been washed off apply a bland moisturiser (cetaben, hydromol). As the abnormal cells die and are replaced, the skin barrier becomes damaged which makes the skin sore. This can make a skin infection more likely, although not common. If you are not sure whether you have a treatment reaction or an infection, please contact us at the clinic.

### What are the rare side effects of imiquimod cream?

If you have a severe reaction to imiquimod the treated area may become ulcerated. The skin colour can become darker or lighter after inflammation, and rarely these colour changes can be permanent. Imiquimod cream activates the immune system, and there have been rare reports of pre-existing autoimmune disease

flaring up. Some women describe flu-like symptoms whilst using the cream.

Very rarely, you could be allergic to the cream, which could cause a severe allergic skin reaction. However, redness and soreness are expected with the treatment if the cream is working.

## **Where can I find more information about imiquimod cream?**

[www.dermnetnz.org/treatments/imiquimod.html](http://www.dermnetnz.org/treatments/imiquimod.html)

[www.medicines.org.uk/emc/ingredient/38/imiquimod](http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/ingredient/38/imiquimod)

## **Who can I contact if I have any questions?**

Please contact Maria Cleverdon, our vulval nurse specialist through the colposcopy office on 01392 406580.

The Trust cannot accept any responsibility for the accuracy of the information given if the leaflet is not used by RD&E staff undertaking procedures at the RD&E hospitals.

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