

- **What is 5-fluorouracil? (Efudex®, Carac®, Fluoroplex®)**

5-fluorouracil is a topical treatment for multiple precancerous actinic keratoses (AKs) (or solar keratoses) and superficial basal cell carcinoma (sBCC), a form of skin cancer. These lesions are caused by sun exposure.

- **What is the most important information I should know about 5-fluorouracil?**

5-fluorouracil should not be used in women who are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. This drug may harm an unborn child.

5-fluorouracil should only be applied topically (on the skin), not on any mucous membranes (e.g., lips, eyes). During pregnancy, cases of miscarriage have been associated with 5-fluorouracil application to mucous membranes.

Treatment areas may be unsightly during therapy and, usually, for several weeks after stopping therapy.

- **Who should not take 5-fluorouracil?**

Do not begin treatment with 5-fluorouracil if you are a pregnant or plan to become pregnant.

Do not take 5-fluorouracil if you are allergic to fluorouracil or any of its ingredients or if you have a condition called "dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase [DPD] enzyme deficiency."

- **What should I tell my doctor before I take the first dose of 5-fluorouracil?**

Tell your doctor about all prescription, over-the-counter, and herbal medications you are taking before beginning treatment with 5-fluorouracil. Also, talk to your doctor about your complete medical history, especially if you are pregnant, plan to become pregnant, or breastfeeding. This drug may cause severe harm to your unborn baby.

- **What is the usual dosage?**

The information below is based on the dosage guidelines your doctor uses. Depending on your condition and medical history, your doctor may prescribe a different regimen. Do not change the dosage or stop taking your medication without your doctor's approval.

Actinic Keratoses (AKs) or Solar Keratoses

Adults: The usual application of 5-fluorouracil is a sufficient amount to cover the lesions twice a day for 2-4 weeks. Complete healing of lesions may not be seen until 1-2 months after completion of therapy.

Superficial Basal Cell Carcinoma (sBCC) (only the 5% 5-fluorouracil is recommended)

Adults: The usual application of 5-fluorouracil is a sufficient amount to cover the lesions twice a day for at least 3-6 weeks, and up to 10-12 weeks.

- **How should I take 5-fluorouracil?**

Apply a sufficient amount to cover the lesions twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. Use enough cream to cover the lesions, and be careful when applying near the eyes, nose, and mouth.

Using a nonmetal applicator or a glove to apply 5-fluorouracil is preferred. If you use your fingers to apply 5-fluorouracil, wash your hands immediately afterward.

Do not apply 5-fluorouracil on the eyelids or directly into the eyes, nose, or mouth.

- **What should I avoid while taking 5-fluorouracil?**

Avoid becoming pregnant, or avoid taking 5-fluorouracil while you are pregnant.

Avoid staying in the sun or ultraviolet light (e.g., sunlamps, tanning booths) for prolonged periods of time.

- **What are possible food and drug interactions associated with 5-fluorouracil?**

There are no significant interactions reported with 5-fluorouracil at this time. However, always tell your doctor about any medicines you take, including over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, and herbal supplements.

- **What are the possible side effects of 5-fluorouracil?**

Side effects cannot be anticipated. If any develop or change in intensity, tell your doctor as soon as possible. Only your doctor can determine if it is safe for you to continue taking this drug.

Side effects may include: allergic reactions, burning, crusting, darkening of the skin, irritation, itchiness, pain, rash, redness, scarring, sensitivity to light, soreness, ulceration, wearing of the skin

- **Can I receive 5-fluorouracil if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?**

There are cases of miscarriages and birth defect when 5-fluorouracil was applied during pregnancy. 5-fluorouracil may harm the unborn baby.

Talk to your doctor if you are breastfeeding. Your doctor may recommend that you discontinue breastfeeding or stop using 5-fluorouracil.

- **What should I do if I miss a dose of 5-fluorouracil?**

If you miss a dose of 5-fluorouracil, apply the missed dose as soon as you remember it. However, if it is almost time for your next dose, skip the one you missed and return to your regular dosing schedule. Do not double the dose.

- **How should I store 5-fluorouracil?**

Store 5-fluorouracil at room temperature.

- **What to do after or during treatment to relieve discomfort?**

You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) if you are experiencing pain.

Apply petrolatum (Vaseline) and sunscreen daily until healed.

Call our office during regular business hours with any concerns or questions.