PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Fluorouracil and Salicylic Acid

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

Brand Names: Canada

Actikerall

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat a precancerous skin problem called actinic keratosis.

What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you have a dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) deficiency or kidney disease.
- If you have taken brivudine or sorivudine in the last 4 weeks.

- If you are pregnant or may be pregnant. Do not take this drug if you are pregnant.
- If you are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed while you take this drug.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Certain acne products that contain benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid can rarely cause very bad and sometimes life-threatening allergic reactions or very bad irritation. Before first use, you may need to follow certain steps to make sure you do not have an allergic reaction. Use this drug as you were told by the doctor or read the package

label. Talk with the doctor.

- It may take several weeks to see the full effects.
- Do not use longer than you have been told by the doctor.
- The treated area may be more sensitive to light. Light may cause a burning or stinging feeling. Protect the treated area and skin around it from sun, sunlamps, bright indoor lights, and tanning beds after this drug is put on and for as long as you have been told by your doctor. Wear the proper covering like a wide-brimmed hat, long sleeve shirt, or gloves to protect the treated skin from light. Sunscreens will not help.
- Talk with your doctor before you use other drugs or products on your skin. This includes soaps.
- This drug may catch on fire. Do not use near an open flame or while smoking.
- This drug may stain fabric, flooring, painted surfaces, marble, granite, vinyl, and enamel.
- The chance of severe and sometimes deadly side effects is raised in patients who do not have the enzyme dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase (DPD) in the body. These include mouth irritation or sores, diarrhea, low white blood cell counts, or nerve problems.
- This drug can be harmful and even deadly to pets. Do

not let pets come in contact with the container or the treated area on your skin. Store this drug out of reach of pets. Throw away or clean the cloth or applicators that were used to put this drug on. Do not put this drug on your clothes, carpet, or furniture. If a pet has chewed the container, come into contact with this drug, swallowed this drug, licked the treated area, or throws up or has a seizure, call your veterinarian right away.

- This drug may cause harm to the unborn baby if you take it while you are pregnant. If you are pregnant or you get pregnant while taking this drug, call your doctor right away.

What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

WARNING/CAUTION: Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching; red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.

- Stomach pain or cramps.
- Diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Any unexplained bruising or bleeding.
- Black stools.
- Ringing in ears.
- Fast breathing.
- A fast heartbeat.
- Feeling confused.
- Feeling sluggish.

What are some other side effects of this drug?

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Headache.
- People using this drug may get skin reactions where this drug is used. These reactions may include burning or stinging, itching, pain, redness, swelling, or bleeding. Call your doctor if you have skin reactions that are very bad, bother you, or do not go away.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you

have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1- 800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

How is this drug best taken?

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

- Do not take this drug by mouth. Use on your skin only. Keep out of your mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- If you get this drug in the eyes, flush right away with cool water and get medical help.
- Wash your hands before and after use.
- Before putting this drug on, take off the film left on the treated skin from where it was put on the day before.
- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- Put a thin layer on the affected skin.
- Avoid putting on healthy skin.
- Do not use coverings (bandages, dressings) unless told to do so by the doctor.

- Do not put on cuts, scrapes, eczema, or damaged skin.
- Do not put on any lesions that are bleeding.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not put on 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

How do I store and/or throw out this drug?

- Store at room temperature. Do not refrigerate or freeze.
- Protect from heat or open flame.
- Keep lid tightly closed.
- Throw away any unused portion of opened containers after 3 months.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.

- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else's drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. Check with your pharmacist. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care

provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

Last Reviewed Date

2022-10-06

Copyright

© 2026 UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates and/or licensors. All rights reserved.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Fluorouracil and Salicylic Acid - Last updated on December 12, 2022
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center