Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Fluorouracil (Topical

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: US

Carac [DSC]; Efudex [DSC]; Tolak

Brand Names: Canada

Efudex; Tolak

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat a precancerous skin problem called actinic keratosis.
- It is used to treat a type of skin cancer called basal cell carcinoma. Only the 5% strength is for use to treat basal cell carcinoma.

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 dihydropyrimidine dehydrogenase deficiency.
- 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.
- If the patient is a child. Do not give this drug to a child.

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.
- Only the 5% strength is used to treat basal cell carcinoma. If you are using this drug to treat basal cell carcinoma and you do not have the 5% strength, talk with your doctor.
- If you are allergic to peanuts, talk with the doctor.
- It may take a few months to see the full effect.
- Skin may look worse before it looks better.
- You can get sunburned more easily. Avoid sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds.
- You may use a moisturizer or sunscreen 2 hours after putting this drug on if your doctor has told you to. Do not use other drugs or products on your skin without checking with your doctor.
- 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.
- Use birth control to prevent pregnancy during treatment with this drug. You may also need to use birth control for some time after your last dose. Talk with your doctor to see if you need to use birth control after you stop this drug.

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.
- Bloody diarrhea.
- Throwing up.
- Severe diarrhea.
- Change in eyesight, eye pain, or severe eye irritation.
- Mouth irritation or mouth sores.
- Fever, chills, or sore throat; any unexplained bruising or bleeding; or feeling very tired or weak.

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:

- Itching.
- Change in skin color.
- Scarring.
- Most people using this drug get skin reactions where this drug is used. These reactions include burning, dryness, irritation, redness, pain, and swelling. Irritation may last for 2 weeks or longer after you stop using this drug. Call your doctor if you get a skin reaction that bothers you.

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. Do not put this drug on your eyes, eyelids, mouth, or nose (may cause irritation or ulcers).
- Do not let this drug build up in the skin folds around your eyes, nose, or mouth.
- If you get this drug in any of these areas, rinse well with water.
- Wash your hands before and after use. If your hand is the treated area, do not wash your hand after use.
- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well.
- Wait 10 minutes after washing affected part before putting drug on skin.
- Put a thin layer on the affected skin and rub in gently.
- 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 healthy skin.
- Do not let the skin where this drug was used touch anyone else's skin after you have used this drug.

What do I do if I miss a dose?

- Put on a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next 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 freeze.
- Store in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- 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.

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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.

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