PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Imiquimod

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

Zyclara Pump; Zyclara [DSC]

Brand Names: Canada

Aldara P; TARO-Imiquimod Pump; Vyloma; Zyclara

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat genital warts.
- It is used to treat perianal warts.
- It is used to treat skin harmed by the sun and some skin cancers.

What do I need to tell the doctor BEFORE my child takes this drug?

- If your child is allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell the doctor about the allergy and what signs your child had.
- If your child's skin has not healed from other treatment or surgery.
- If your child is using another drug that has the same drug in it.

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

Tell the doctor and pharmacist about all of your child's drugs (prescription or

OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe to give this drug with all of your child's other drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug your child takes without checking with the doctor.

What are some things I need to know or do while my child takes this drug?

For all uses of this drug:

- Tell all of your child's health care providers that your child is taking this drug. This includes your child's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Have your child's skin checked often. Talk with the doctor.
- Your child may get sunburned more easily. Avoid lots of sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds. Use sunscreen and dress your child in clothing and eyewear that protects from the sun.

If your child is pregnant or breast-feeding a baby:

- Talk with the doctor if your child is pregnant, becomes pregnant, or is breast-feeding a baby. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to your child and the baby.

For genital or perianal warts:

- This drug will not cure genital or perianal warts. Your child may get new warts while using this drug. Tell the doctor if your child gets any new warts.

If your child is or may be sexually active:

- For genital or perianal warts only: Condoms or diaphragms may not work to prevent pregnancy. Have your child use some other kind of birth control while taking this drug.
- Your child must not have any form of sex when this drug is on the genital or anal skin.

What are some side effects that I need to call my child's 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 child's doctor or get medical help right away if your child has any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

For all uses of this drug:

- 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.
- Flu-like signs. These include headache, weakness, fever, shakes, aches, pains, and sweating.
- Bleeding.
- Swollen gland.
- People using this drug may get skin reactions where this drug is used or around the area. These reactions may include burning, crusting, dryness, flaking, itching, oozing, pain, redness, scabbing, scaling, sores or ulcers, or swelling. If these reactions get very bad, a break from using this drug may be needed as told by the doctor. Wash this drug off the affected area with mild soap and water, then talk with the doctor.
- Call the doctor right away if a skin reaction happens that bothers your child or makes it hard to keep using this drug. Call the doctor right away if your child has a skin reaction that causes problems with daily living.

For genital or perianal warts:

- Vaginal pain or swelling.
- Trouble passing urine.

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 child's doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother your child or do not go away:

- Change in color of skin. This may not go back to normal.
- Headache.
- Upset stomach.
- Feeling tired or weak.
- Signs of a common cold.
- Sinus pain.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your child's doctor. Call your child's doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

How is this drug best given?

Give this drug as ordered by your child's doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

All products:

- Do not use more or for longer than you have been told. This may raise the chance of a very bad skin reaction or other side effect.
- Do not give by mouth. Use on your child's skin only. Keep out of your child's mouth, nose, and eyes (may burn).
- Do not put in the vagina or anus.
- Give at bedtime.
- Wash hands before and after use.

- Clean affected part before use. Make sure to dry well (at least 10 minutes) before putting on this drug.
- Put a thin layer on the affected part and rub in gently.
- Do not put on sunburned skin.
- Do not put on cuts, scrapes, burns, rashes, or infected or damaged skin.
- Avoid putting on healthy skin unless you have been told to do so by the doctor.
- Do not use coverings (bandages, dressings) unless told to do so by your child's doctor.
- Do not let your child bathe, shower, or swim after using.
- Leave on the skin for as long as the doctor told you to, then wash off.

For genital or perianal warts:

- If your child is uncircumcised with warts under the foreskin, pull back the foreskin and clean every day.

Packets:

- Throw away any part of the packet not used after use.

Pump:

- Prime pump before first use.
- You will not need to prime the pump again while your child is using this drug.

What do I do if my child misses a dose?

- Skip the missed dose and go back to your child's 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?

All products:

- Store at room temperature. Do not freeze.
- 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.

Pump:

- Store upright with the cap on.

General drug facts

- If your child's symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your child's doctor.
- Do not share your child's drug with others and do not give anyone else's drug to your child.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your child's 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

2024-11-01

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.

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

Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center