



## Field Treatments for Sun-Damaged Skin - Imiquimod (Aldara)

Information for patients

### What is imiquimod (Aldara)?

- Aldara is a cream that indirectly eliminates pre-cancerous and cancerous cells from the skin by stimulating the body's immune system to target and destroy the cells
- Aldara was effective at eliminating at least 75% of actinic keratoses in 53.9% of patients in a recent randomized control trial. Earlier meta-analyses compiling data from multiple trials have shown complete resolution of actinic keratoses in 56-63% of patients.

### How do I apply imiquimod?

- Apply a thin layer of the cream atop all affected areas using your fingers or a Q-tip
- Avoid the eyelids and the corners of the mouth
- If the medication accidentally gets into the eyes, wash out thoroughly with clean water
- Wash the medication off in the morning (after 8-10 hours)
- Repeat application 2-3 times per week for 4-6 weeks or how long your doctor recommends

### What to expect:

Within a few applications, the treated area will become red and irritated. You may develop scaling and itching, and mild pain or tenderness to touch. Some people even develop small breaks in the skin (erosions). These changes are evidence that the cancerous cells are being treated, and you can expect the symptoms to last for the entire time you are using the treatment.

- If the treated area becomes very painful, or if you develop draining ulcers/sores, stop the medication and call your doctor
- A very small percentage of patients (<5% reported) note mild flu-like symptoms after initiating treatment. These include headache, weakness, fever/chills, sweating, and muscle aches. Contact your doctor if these occur.
- Redness typically resolves within 2-3 weeks after treatment is completed. The skin left behind should be smooth and slightly pink.

### Other important information:

- Your skin will be more sensitive to the sun during and after treatment. Ensure proper use of sunscreen (SPF 30+) prior to sun-exposure to prevent further sun damage and sunburn.
- You may need repeat treatment in the future. Do not re-start treatment with this cream unless your doctor has explicitly instructed this.
- Please call our office with any questions or concerns (781)-591-4234

### Our Office:

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### References:

Jansen, M., et al. (2019). Randomized trial of four treatment approaches for actinic keratosis. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 380(10), 935-946.  
Hadley, G., Derry, S., Moore, R. A. (2006). Imiquimod for actinic keratosis: systemic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Investigative Dermatology*, 126(6), 1251-1255.  
Vegter, S., Tolley, K. (2014). A network meta-analysis of the relative efficacy of treatments for actinic keratosis of the face or scalp in Europe. *PLoS One*, 9(6), e96829.