



Imiquimod treatment for Vulval Intraepithelial Neoplasia (VIN)

Imiquimod (Aldara) cream has been prescribed to treat your VIN. Imiquimod cream is a 5% skin cream which works as an immune response modifier. The main aim is to resolve your VIN and relieve symptoms such as pain, itching or burning.

How does Imiquimod work?

Imiquimod cream activates your immune system to recognise abnormal cells. This causes inflammation of the skin and helps to remove them. Whilst you are using the cream you may notice the skin becomes red, swollen or sore. Your skin may peel, crack or blister. This is to be expected and is part of the treatment. The inflammation should settle after a few weeks of stopping the cream.

How to use the cream

Make sure you clean the area before applying Imiquimod.

Always wash your hands before and after application and avoid contact with other skin.

Cut the sachet and squeeze some Imiquimod onto your fingertip. Using a mirror identify the area to be treated, rub the cream in gently. Use enough to cover the area (this may not be the whole sachet) Start by applying the cream to the area once a week until you are able to tolerate application up to three times per week. Be guided by how severely you react.

This should be done for the next 12-16 weeks.

Imiquimod cream should be left on for 6-10 hours. It is best put on before you go to bed and then washed off in the morning using Hydromol or Cetraban.

Do not have sex on the night you use the cream even with a condom. Imiquimod can weaken the latex of the condom.

Take simple painkillers to help with mild symptoms.

If you have a severe reaction to Imiquimod or are unable to tolerate the treatment please get in touch with the Colposcopy Department.



Whilst having this treatment you may find it helpful to follow some simple vulval care principles:

Put a barrier such as Vaseline around the area which is being treated to protect the unaffected skin.

Do not use soap on the vulval skin. Use Cetaban or Hydromol emollient cream liberally in between Imiquimod treatments. You may find it helpful to keep the emollient cream in the fridge to help soothe the irritation of the affected area.

What are the common side effects of Imiquimod Cream?

Within 3-5 days, the skin treated with Imiquimod cream can become red and sore. Even the normal looking skin around the treated area may be affected. The skin may weep, peel, crack or even blister and then scab over. The skin can be itchy, sore, painful or burn. This is caused by the abnormal cells dying and is a sign that the treatment is working. The skin reaction tends to be worse in week 2- 3 of the application. It is normal for redness and crusting to persist for around two weeks after the course has finished.

Some people will experience flu like symptoms, mild aches and pains or swollen lymph nodes. Taking a mild painkiller like paracetamol can help.

If the skin becomes too red or painful to tolerate, stop the cream for a week and then restart it again once the skin is more comfortable.

What cautions apply for use of Imiquimod cream?

Do not use Imiquimod cream if you are allergic to any of the ingredients.

Do not use Imiquimod cream if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Do not use Imiquimod cream if you are spending time in strong sunlight or using sunbeds.

What are the rare side effects of Imiquimod cream?

If you have a severe reaction to Imiquimod cream, the treated area may become ulcerated. This risk is highest on the legs. The skin colour may become darker or lighter following severe inflammation. Rarely, this change in colour can be permanent. Following a severe reaction, there is a small risk of scarring and hair loss in the treated area. Imiquimod cream activates the immune system and very rarely there have been reports of pre-existing autoimmune disease flaring up.



For more information on Imiquimod Cream

<https://dermnetnz.org/topics/imiquimod/>

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Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.whitthealthPALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please contact us on 020 7288 3182. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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