

Aldara®

Aldara® [Imiquimod] cream is very effective at treating early and superficial changes in the skin caused by the sun. It works by destroying unstable skin cells and makes the immune system repair the damaged skin.

We generally use Aldara® to treat persistent Solar Keratoses, Bowen's Disease (Intra-Epithelial Skin Cancer), superficial Basal Cell Carcinoma, and Lentigo Maligna (pigmentation caused by abnormal melanocytes).

Treatment should ideally be limited to relatively small areas of skin (<10cm) and it can cause quite intense inflammation of the skin. This will typically make the skin look a lot worse before it improves. This is seen as redness, soreness and weeping. If this is uncomfortable, it is often preferable to leave off treatment for a few days until recovery takes place. The inflammation will often last for the entire duration of treatment. Another rare side-effect is flu-like symptoms due to the release of chemicals (Cytokines) into the blood stream. This may produce a fever and a headache. Some patients are unable to tolerate the treatment because of these side-effects.

One of the advantages of using Aldara® cream is that it will treat the whole area of sun-damage and can help improve the skin for several years. It is generally 85% effective. The downside is that it can cause significant symptoms during treatment until the skin heals again.

Method 1 – Apply cream sparingly nightly for 6-weeks excluding weekends

The Aldara® cream comes in small sachets. Cut-off a corner and apply the cream sparingly to the affected area. Try and make each sachet last 2-3 days and store in the fridge. Apply during weekday nights and leave off treatment at the weekend to allow the skin to recover.

It is entirely normal to expect some redness, soreness and weeping of affected areas. If severe, leave off the treatment for a few days. For treating large areas on the face, it may be beneficial to start at one site and rotate the treatment to other sites after the first site has been treated for 6-weeks. See your GP or ask for an appointment if the reaction is severe. It can be helped by the application of a topical steroid/antibiotic cream called Fucibet®.

Do not be concerned if very little reaction develops. Some patients still respond to the treatment despite not experiencing inflammation.

Method 2 – Apply cream twice daily for 3-weeks

This method is highly effectively but will also cause quite a severe reaction in some individuals that may last 5-6 weeks. It is more suitable for treatment of smaller areas of sun-damaged skin. If the redness is very sore, discontinue for a few days or refrain from treatment at the weekends. See your GP or ask for an appointment if the reaction is very severe. It can be helped by the application of a topical steroid/antibiotic cream called Fucibet®.