

Actinic (Solar) Keratoses : Guidelines for Management

Solar (or actinic) keratoses are lesions of superficial epidermal dysplasia on sun damaged skin, usually in patients over the age of 50.

All patients should be advised to use appropriate sun protection.

Small, flat, slightly scaly solar keratoses which are causing no discomfort or distress to the patient

Strong advice on careful sun protection, patient may need to purchase emollients over the counter to use for symptomatic relief

Advise patient to report any sudden changes in appearance, size and thickness or the development of pain

Limited number of lesions

Cryotherapy (Primary & Secondary care) A single, brief freeze of 5 – 10 seconds is usually sufficient. Thicker lesions may require a slightly longer freeze.

Small lesions and mild to moderate solar damage

Efudix® Cream (5% Fluorouracil)
FIRST-LINE
Considerable improvement seen if used once a day/ at night for 4 weeks. Warn patients that skin will become inflamed, sore and possibly weepy and crusted.
TLS: Green
Cost per course*: £32.90 (1 x 40g tube)

Solaraze® Gel (3% Diclofenac)
SECOND-LINE
Thinly twice a day for 8-12 weeks. Can be irritant.
TLS: Green
Cost per course*: £76.60 (2 x 50g tube or 1 x 100g)

Klisyri® Ointment (1% tirbanibulin)
SECOND OR THIRD-LINE
Face or scalp only. Apply thinly once a day for 5 days; assess therapeutic effect after ~8 weeks.
TLS: Green
Cost per course*: £59.00 (1 x 5 sachets of 250mg cream)

Thick, keratotic lesions

Efudix® Cream (5% Fluorouracil)
FIRST-LINE
Considerable improvement seen if used once a day/ at night for 4 weeks. Warn patients that skin will become inflamed, sore and possibly weepy and crusted.
TLS: Green
Cost per course*: £32.90 (1 x 40g tube)

Actikerall® Solution (Fluorouracil 0.5% & Salicylic Acid 10%)
SECOND-LINE
Once a day for up to 12 weeks.
TLS: Green
Cost per course*: £76.60 (2 x 25ml)

Widespread, ill-defined areas of solar damage

Efudix® Cream (5% Fluorouracil)
FIRST-LINE
Considerable improvement is seen if used once a day at night for 4 weeks. Warn patients that skin will become inflamed, sore and possibly weepy and crusted.
TLS: Green
Cost per course*: £32.90 (1 x 40g tube)

Aldara® Cream Imiquimod 5%
SECOND-LINE
Three times a week at night for 4 weeks. (Additional 4 week course can be used for persisting lesions.)
TLS: Green
Cost per course*: £48.60 (4wks/12 sachets) £97.20 (2 x 4wks/24 sachets)

***Doses for general comparison and do not imply therapeutic equivalence. Cost per course quoted is estimate based on treating a surface area of 5x5cm. More than one unit may be needed for a full course of treatment depending on type of lesions and area of skin being treated. For full prescribing info see Individual Summary of Product Characteristics available via <https://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>**

British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) Resources:

- Patient info leaflet [Actinic keratoses - BAD Patient Hub \(skinhealthinfo.org.uk\)](#)
- BAD Clinical guidelines <https://www.bad.org.uk/healthcare-professionals/clinical-standards/clinical-guidelines>

WHEN TO REFER

- Diagnostic uncertainty
- Suspicion of malignancy (refer under 2 week rule) – beware atypical keratoses, esp if lesions are tender, painful, ulcerated or growing rapidly.
- Patient on immunosuppressant drugs (e.g. post-transplant)
- Lesions that have not responded to treatment
- Very young patients

****Ingenol mebutate gel (Picato ▼): Jan 2020**
Removed from pathway in response to manufacturer's decision to recall due to concerns on the possible risk of skin malignancy. See MHRA Ref: MDR 112-01/20 for further advice **