

How to use 5-fluorouracil

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5-Fluorouracil (5-FU, trade name Efudex) is a chemotherapy medication when taken by mouth. However, in dermatology, we use it to treat skin conditions such as actinic keratoses, certain types of skin cancer, warts, and others. When applied topically, it is not absorbed into the blood stream. Therefore it does NOT cause the typical chemotherapy side effects such as hair loss, etc. It is SAFE to your body.

5-FU works by destroying the damaged cells on your skin. As a result, it causes redness, irritation, and scabbing. This is a normal part of therapeutic skin response to 5-FU.

Please apply 5-FU to the affected area on your skin two times a day. The duration of treatment depends on the skin condition. Typically it takes 2 weeks for face, 3 weeks for scalp, 3 weeks for arms and legs, and 12 weeks for warts (For warts, the medication needs to be covered with a band aid at night time to be effective).

The treated areas need to be completely protected from the sun during the treatment and the recovery process. If you do need to go out to the sun, cover the area with a hat, long sleeve shirts, gloves, etc.

If your skin is mildly red, irritated but tolerable, please bear with it and continue the treatment. If the skin is intensely red, itchy, or scabbing, you can apply the steroid cream I prescribe to you two times a day as necessary. If the steroid cream is still not sufficient to soothe the area, please call my office. I will talk to you on the phone first, or ask you to come to the office for evaluation if necessary.