

How do I use Imiquimod?

Start by using the cream once a week and then increase the frequency until you are using it three times a week. If it is very uncomfortable after the first use, wait until the symptoms ease before using it again. Be guided by how severely you react. If you can manage three times a week, do so, but if not use it as often as you can manage.

Suck the contents of the sachet up into a small plastic syringe. Put the syringe as far into your vagina as you can and then push the plunger all the way in. The remove the syringe.

Imiquimod cream should be left on for 6-10 hours, so put it on before bed and wash it off in the morning using Hydromol.

Wash your hands thoroughly after using Imiquimod.

DO NOT have sex on the night you use the cream even with a condom as imiquimod may weaken the latex of the condom.

DO NOT take by mouth or allow to come into contact with eyes.

DO NOT share your cream with anybody else.

Tips for Success

As imiquimod works with your immune system it can take time to work. **Try and persevere.** The following tips may help you:

- Put a barrier such as Vaseline on the vulva to protect skin.
- Paracetamol based pain killers will help with mild symptoms. However, **do not** take anti-inflammatory medication such as aspirin or Ibuprofen (Brufen), unless you are taking these for other reasons.
- Avoid using imiquimod if you have an important event coming up, for example, before holidays.
- Use Hydromol liberally in between Imiquimod treatments. Keep a tub in the fridge and apply cold to soothe irritation.
- Maintain the usual care for vulval skin, for example, don't use soap or wash underwear in biological powder.
- If you need to visit your GP inform them of your treatment.
- **Stop using Imiquimod if your reaction is severe and you are unable to tolerate it.**

Imiquimod (Aldara™) for the treatment of Vaginal Intraepithelial Neoplasia (VaIN)

Please read this leaflet before you begin using Imiquimod and keep it for reference. It contains useful information to help you with your treatment.

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Why have I been given this treatment?

You have been given imiquimod cream to treat your Vaginal Intraepithelial Neoplasia (VaIN).

VaIN means that there are abnormal cells in the skin of your vagina, see leaflet on VaIN.

These abnormal cells **ARE NOT** cancer, but in a small number of women they may develop into cancer over many years. We have no way of knowing whether your abnormal cells will develop into cancer or not.

Treatment may reduce the risk of developing cancer at a later date.

What are the other treatment options?

Conservative management There is a very small risk of a cancer developing. You would be closely followed up, so that any cancer could be picked up early. This would then be treated with radiotherapy..

Surgery For small single lesions this may be useful. However, it may also be extensive and involve removing the entire vagina, so is rarely used in this situation.

What is imiquimod cream?

We know that most VaIN is caused by the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and imiquimod is a possible treatment.

Imiquimod is an immune response modifier, which means that it stimulates your own immune system to fight the HPV. Imiquimod is currently licensed for use on genital warts which are caused by a different type of HPV.

It is also licensed for the treatment of actinic keratosis (a common skin lesion that also has the potential to become skin cancer) and superficial basal cell carcinoma (an early skin cancer). Neither of these conditions is caused by HPV.

Research has also shown that Imiquimod can also be effective in VIN, which is where the abnormal cells are on the vulva, the skin outside the vagina. One large study showed over 50% of women responded. The study was published in The Lancet Oncology and you can read it online on their site – search online for “Lancet VIN imiquimod”.

Imiquimod causes inflammation (redness and swelling) of the skin. This inflammation may help your body get rid of the abnormal cells. The degree of inflammation will vary from person to person.

What can I expect?

Imiquimod is not an easy treatment to use because it causes inflammation.

Because it stimulates your immune system which results in inflammation you **WILL** get some or all of the following to some degree:

- Redness
- Wearing away of the skin
- Flakiness
- Swelling
- Blisters
- Tenderness

The degree of inflammation you get does not mean that the cream is more or less effective.

All symptoms decline in severity with less frequent use.

Some women also get ‘flu’ like symptoms such as headache, fatigue and occasionally diarrhoea. These symptoms clear when treatment is stopped.