

**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

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

Thick, keratotic lesions

**Efudix® Cream** (5% FU)  
**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)

**Actikerall® Solution** (Fluorouracil (FU) 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

Listed in increasing duration of course order (left to right)

**Efudix® Cream** (5% FU)  
**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)

**Imiquimod 5% Cream (Aldara®) – 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 are for general comparison and do not imply therapeutic equivalence. Cost per course quoted is an estimate based on treating a surface area of 5x5cm. More than one unit may be needed for a full course of treatment depending on the type of lesions and the area of skin being treated.**

## WHEN TO REFER

- **Suspicion of malignancy** (refer under 2 week rule) – beware atypical keratoses, particularly if the 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**
- **Diagnostic uncertainty**

**\*\*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 \*\*