

# Imiquimod - Topical

Names	The generic drug name is imiquimod (i mi kwi' mod). Aldara®, and Zyclara® are brand names. There may be other names for this medication.
Why am I Using Imiquimod and How Do I Use it?	<p>Imiquimod cream is used to treat actinic keratosis - rough, scaly patches on your face or scalp caused by many years of sun exposure. Actinic keratosis is not skin cancer, but if left untreated, a small percentage will become skin cancer. This medication may be used to treat some superficial basal cell skin cancers.</p> <p>Imiquimod is a cream that you apply it to your skin.</p>
How Does it Work?	Imiquimod stimulates the immune system to release chemicals called <i>cytokines</i> , which are important in destroying cancer cells.
What Should I Tell My Doctor Before I Begin Imiquimod?	<p>Tell your doctor if you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• have ever had an allergic reaction to imiquimod or have allergies</li><li>• have a sunburn or if you have ever had unusual sensitivity to sunlight</li><li>• have any skin disease such as psoriasis or graft vs host disease or any condition that affects your immune system such as HIV</li><li>• have had recent surgery to the affected area</li><li>• are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning to do either</li></ul> <p><b>This medication may interact with other medications. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any prescription or over-the-counter medications, vitamins, herbal or diet supplements that you are taking.</b></p>
How do I Apply Imiquimod?	<p>Imiquimod cream is only for use on the skin. Do not apply it in or near your eyes, lips, nostrils, vagina, or anus. If you get imiquimod cream in your mouth or eyes, rinse well with water right away.</p> <p>Imiquimod cream comes in single-use packets. If you use only a portion of a packet for an application, do not throw it away. You can keep it from drying out by putting it in a resealable plastic bag.</p>

**To use the cream, follow these steps:**

1. Wash your hands.
2. Wash the area to be treated with mild soap and water and let dry.
3. Apply a thin layer of cream to the area to be treated, just before going to sleep.
4. Rub the cream into the skin until it disappears.
5. Wash your hands.
6. Leave the cream on the area for the amount of time your doctor has told you to do so. Do not bathe, shower, or swim during this time.
7. After the treatment time is over, wash the area with mild soap and water to remove any cream.

**What are the Possible Side Effects?**

- On treated skin, you may have mild redness, itching, or burning
- mild flaking, scaling, dryness, blisters, bumps, or thickening of the skin
- mild headache

**How Can I Manage These Side Effects?**

- Talk to your doctor if side effects are severe such as oozing or pain that is more than mild.
- Plan to avoid any unnecessary or prolonged exposure to sunlight; do not go to a tanning bed. Wear protective clothing, sunglasses, and sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher when you are outdoors, even for a short time.

**When Should I Call the Doctor?**

**Call your doctor immediately if you have:**

- skin breakdown or sores that have drainage, especially during the first week of treatment
- flu-like symptoms such as nausea, fever, chills, or muscle weakness.

**What Else Do I Need to Know About Imiquimod?**

- This cream may cause changes in your skin color that may not go away after treatment. Tell your doctor if you notice skin changes.
- Use exactly as directed by your doctor. No more, no less.
- Do not cover the treated areas with a tight bandage or dressing unless your doctor tells you to do so.
- If you miss a dose, apply it as soon as you remember. If almost time for the next dose, skip the missed dose and continue the regular schedule.
- Store at room temperature, away from excess heat and moisture -do not keep it in the bathroom. Do not freeze.
- Throw away any medication that is outdated or no longer needed.
- For more information, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.