

Imiquimod for the treatment of vulval intraepithelial neoplasia (VIN)

Patient information

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

When do I need to apply the ointment?

The ointment should be applied three times per week (for example on Monday, Wednesday and Friday). If it becomes too painful to use three times a week, use it less often for a while. Then try to build back up to three times a week. Imiquimod ointment should be left on for 6-10 hours, so put it on before bed and wash it off in the morning using aqueous cream.

How do I apply the cream?

Squeeze the contents of one sachet onto your finger-tip. Use a mirror to identify the area to be treated and rub in the cream gently until it has vanished. Wash your hands thoroughly afterwards.

What do I do if the place where I am applying the ointment is painful?

We have also prescribed you lignocaine ointment. If the area is painful, apply this four hours before applying the Imiquimod ointment.

The lignocaine can be used four times a day if needed. If you need more pain relief, use paracetamol or paracetamol and codeine (you can buy these over the counter). Remember the most paracetamol you can take in 24 hours is eight 500mg tablets.

Is it safe to have sexual intercourse while on this treatment?

- **Do not** have sex on the night you use the ointment, even with a condom, as imiquimod may weaken the latex of the condom, **and** for 12 hours after applying the cream, including skin to skin contact.
- **You must** use a condom when having sex.
- **You must**, in addition to a condom, use an effective method of contraception. Note: it can also weaken diaphragms.
- You are advised not to become pregnant during treatment.

Is there anything else I mustn't do while using the Imiquimod treatment?

- **Do not** take it by mouth or allow it to come into contact with the eyes.
- **Do not** share your cream with anybody else.
- **Do not** take anti-inflammatory medication such as aspirin or ibuprofen (Brufen).

What can I do if I'm struggling with the treatment?

Try to persevere as the treatment can take time to work. The following tips may help you:

- Try putting some barrier cream such as Vaseline around the area to be treated to protect the unaffected skin
- Paracetamol-based painkillers will help with mild symptoms, however, **do not** take anti-inflammatory medication such as aspirin or ibuprofen (Brufen).
- Use aqueous cream liberally 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 and contact the department you were attending to let them know:
 - Harbourside Gynaecology Centre **0300 019 2584/3107**
 - Colposcopy Department, first floor, Jigsaw **0300 019 4672**

How will I feel when I am using Imiquimod?

Imiquimod is not always an easy treatment to use. You **will** get some or all the following to some degree:

- redness
- wearing away of the skin
- flakiness
- swelling
- blisters
- tenderness

A few women also complain of 'flu' like symptoms such as headache, fatigue and occasionally diarrhoea. These symptoms clear when treatment is stopped. You will be sent a follow-up appointment in 6-8 weeks so that we can see how you are getting on with the Imiquimod treatment and assess if your condition is responding.

The Royal Bournemouth Hospital, Castle Lane East, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH7 7DW
Poole Hospital, Longfleet Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 2JB

Author: **Marion Woolliss** and **Padma Eedarapalli** Date: **May 2023** Version: **One** Review date: **May 2026** Ref: **167/22**