Treatment for External Genital Warts

Information for parents and carers

Child Sexual Assault Assessment Service (CSAAC)

⚠️ For more information, please contact:

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The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE
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Caring with pride
What is imiquimod (Aldara) cream?

Imiquimod is used to treat external genital and perianal warts (warts that are around the genital area and the bottom). These can also be known as anogenital warts.

How does it work?

Imiquimod cream works by helping your body’s immune system to fight the wart virus, which in turn helps to clear the warts. It can take time for the cream to work. Some people notice an improvement within a couple of weeks but in some cases it can take up to 16 weeks for the warts to go away.

When to apply the cream

Use the cream three times a week, just before going to bed. For example;

Monday, Wednesday and Friday
or
Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

It is important not to use it any more frequently. Use the cream until the warts have gone but do not use for longer than 16 weeks. Please contact the CSAAC (contact details are on the front of this leaflet) or your GP if the warts have not gone after 16 weeks of treatment.
How to apply the cream

• Before going to bed, wash and dry the area where the wart(s) is/are and wash and dry hands. If you prefer to wear the disposable gloves we have provided, put gloves on now.

• Apply a gentle barrier cream such as Vaseline to the healthy skin around the wart area to help to protect the skin.

• Open a new sachet of imiquimod cream each time and squeeze the cream onto your fingertip.

• Apply a thin layer of the cream three times a week as explained on page 3.

• Apply the cream on to the clean, dry wart area and gently rub in until the cream has been absorbed. Take care not to apply the cream to the healthy skin surrounding the wart(s).

• Throw away the sachet after each application.

• Wash your hands with soap and water afterwards.

• The cream should be left on for 6 to 10 hours.

• After 6 to 10 hours, the cream should be washed off with mild soap and water.

• If you miss an application of the cream, restart the alternate day routine using the instructions above, but remember to restart in the evening so that the cream is working overnight and continue as the instructions above.
Possible side effects from using the cream

You may notice redness, itching, burning, pain, flaking of the skin and swelling where you applied the cream. This is normal and is a sign that the cream is working. However, if this becomes too uncomfortable and the surrounding healthy skin is also becoming sore, wash the cream off with mild soap and water. You may need to wait for a few days for the skin to heal. When you are satisfied that there is no redness, tenderness or swelling, you can start to apply the cream again as per the alternate day schedule on page 4.

If you notice severe itching, burning or pain when the cream is applied, wash the cream off the area with mild soap and water, as it may be that the skin is reacting or is too sensitive to tolerate the cream. Stop the treatment and contact your GP or the CSAAC for advice.
Please note:

Imiquimod is for the treatment of external warts only and must not be applied to internal warts, for example inside the vagina, foreskin or rectum.

The cream should only be used for the patient it has been prescribed for.
Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: Liz Costello, Lead Nurse, CSAAC, Acorn Suite, Children’s Assessment Unit, Ward 18, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 721813.

Teaching, Training and Research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

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PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.
Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format

Owner  Liz Costello, Lead Nurse
Date first issued  December 2019
Review Date  November 2021
Version  1 (issued December 2019)
Approved by  Consultant Paediatricians and Head of Safeguarding
Document Reference  PIL 1402 v1
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