
Introduction

This leaflet explains how to use Imiquimod cream to treat anal intraepithelial neoplasia (AIN). Please feel free to ask our team any questions you have about the information below.

What is Imiquimod cream?

It is a cream used to treat genital warts and has also proven to be an effective treatment for AIN. AIN is caused by the human papilloma virus (HPV) which is generally passed from person to person through sexual contact.

Is Imiquimod cream like other treatments?

Imiquimod cream works differently to other treatments. It helps your body's own immune system to fight HPV, which in turn helps to clear the AIN.

How do I use Imiquimod cream?

It should be applied in the anal canal (the first 4-5 centimetres (cm) inside your anus). Do not take it by mouth or use it in or near your eyes.

When do I apply Imiquimod cream?

Use it three times a week, just before going to bed. Apply it on either Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays **or** Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Do not use it any more often because it will not have a greater effect.

How long should I use the cream for?

As Imiquimod works with your immune system it takes time to be effective. We usually recommend a course of 16 weeks of treatment.

How do I apply Imiquimod cream?

1. Before going to bed, wash and dry your hands and around your anus.
2. Use half a sachet each time. Squeeze the cream onto your index finger (pointing finger). You may want to cover your finger with cling film or use a latex glove to insert the cream.
3. Part your buttocks and push the cream up into your anus. If any is left around the outside, then continue pushing the cream inside until it is all gone.
4. Wash your hands with soap and water.
5. Discard the remaining cream, after folding the top of the packet over.

You can dispose of this in the rubbish. Do not use cream from an open packet as it may lose its effect.

You should avoid emptying your bowels, bathing, douching or sexual contact after applying the cream.

What changes will I notice?

Reddening, soreness and wearing away of the skin around the anus is normal. Not all patients will notice this, but the cream may still be working inside.

Rarely, you can develop more significant blistering, pain and flu-like symptoms. Please contact your doctor if this happens.

What should I do if undesirable effects occur?

If you notice severe itching or burning when the cream is applied, then stop the treatment and contact your doctor or nurse.

Can I have sex whilst using Imiquimod cream?

- If you have sex on your treatment day, then you should apply the cream after sex, not before sex
- Avoid sexual contact while the cream is in place

- Imiquimod may weaken condoms - another reason not to have sex after the cream is applied
- Imiquimod cream will not prevent you spreading HPV to your partner
- Do not share your treatment with anyone

There is evidence from clinical studies that it can be used safely in the anal canal for the treatment of AIN, so this advice can be ignored.

Contact details

High resolution anoscopy service
Second floor, Winston Churchill wing
Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
St Mary's Hospital
Praed Street
London W2 1NY
Telephone: **020 3312 6623**

www.imperial.nhs.uk/thejefferisswing

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print, as a sound recording, in Braille, or in alternative languages. Please contact the communications team on **020 3312 5592**.

We have a free and premium wi-fi service at each of our five hospitals. For further information please visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

Stop using the cream and see your doctor to discuss the risks and benefits in your particular case.

What should I do if I miss an application?

Apply the cream as soon as you remember and then continue your normal routine.

Where can I get more information?

Please discuss any further questions with your doctor or nurse in the high resolution anoscopy clinic.

The leaflet provided in the Imiquimod box also contains more information and should be read together with this leaflet. Please note that the manufacturer's information leaflet states that the cream should **not** be used internally.

Division of medicine

Treating anal intraepithelial neoplasia (AIN) with Imiquimod

Information for patients