

### Field Therapy with Topical Fluorouracil

Topical 5-FU is a cream that is used to treat precancerous skin lesions (actinic keratoses) and certain skin cancers. Actinic keratoses are precancerous growths that have the capacity to develop into squamous cell carcinoma, a type of skin cancer. Actinic keratoses can be treated in several ways, but they are most commonly treated with either liquid nitrogen (frozen) or topical medications like 5-FU or sometimes an unrelated medication called imiquimod.

- **Topical 5-FU is generally used once to twice daily.** Use this medication sparingly; you do not need to use a lot of it.
- You may apply the medication with your bare hands, but wash your hands after using it.
- **The medication is used for 2 to 6 weeks depending on what is being treated. Your doctor will tell you how long to use the medication and to what areas.** For treatment of precancers on the face, the course is typically 2 weeks. For treatment of precancers on the scalp, arms, and legs, the course is typically 4 weeks. For treatment of skin cancers, the medication is generally used for a full 6 weeks.
- Apply Vaseline / Aquaphor 10-20 minutes after each treatment.
- Wash the area in the morning and reapply.
- Continue Vaseline in between therapy. Use sunscreen or wear a wide brim hat/long sleeves when you go outside. This will minimize the irritation from the medication.
- The treated area can develop some mild redness during the first week. As the treatment continues you will experience more redness, scaling, and possibly mild swelling during the following weeks. This is completely normal and is expected in most cases. The lesions will resolve as the skin exfoliates.
- The endpoint that you are looking for is a bright-red change that then turns darker or dusky red. This usually takes approximately 2-4 weeks on the face, scalp, or neck. This can take up to 6 weeks on the arms, legs, chest, or back. If you experience bleeding, open skin, or blistering, your skin has reacted a bit strongly, and you may stop application.
- If the normal, expected reaction is too irritating, you can call the office and receive a prescription for a mild topical steroid that can help calm down the irritation.
- It may take 1-2 weeks for the skin to heal after the exfoliation/peeling.
- If you notice excessive crusting, blistering, ulcerations, or intolerable pain, please contact the office. This may indicate a sign of infection or over treating of the lesions.