

Topical 5-FU (Efudex, Carac, etc.)

Topical 5-FU is a cream that is used to treat precancerous skin lesions (actinic keratosis). Actinic Keratoses can develop into Squamous Cell Carcinoma, a type of skin cancer. Actinic Keratoses can be treated in several ways, but they are commonly treated with either liquid nitrogen (frozen) or topical medications such as 5-FU.

- **Topical 5-FU cream is generally used once or twice daily.** Use this medication sparingly; applying a thin layer to the affected areas.
- **You can apply the medication with your bare hands, but wash your hands after using it.** Try to keep the medication away from your eyes.
- **The medication should be applied to the whole area affected (i.e. the face)** – do not spot treat individual Actinic Keratosis unless specifically told to do so.
- **Generally, after one or two weeks your skin will start to look red; this is expected.** As the cream destroys the precancers they will become red, inflamed, irritated, crusty and slightly sore. If your symptoms are severe, call and let us know.
- **The medication is used from 2 weeks to 4 weeks depending on what is being treated.**
- **If you have any questions during the treatment, call us or make an appointment to come in.**
- **Avoid prolonged sun exposure** while you are using this cream. If you do go out in the sun, use a broad spectrum sunscreen.
- Once you finish the medication, the treated area will be red and raw. It takes about 3-4 weeks for the skin to heal. You may use Vaseline to soothe the skin and dissolve any crust. Alternatively, we can give you a prescription ointment to help heal faster if you would like.
- Once your skin completely heals from the treatment, your skin should be smoother and many of the red spots should be gone.
- Keep in mind that the reason you are going through all of this is to destroy precancers and early skin cancers to hopefully reduce your risk of larger and more serious skin cancers that may require surgery.

This medicine is extremely toxic to dogs and cats. DO NOT leave the tube where your dog or cat could get it.