



## 5-FLUOROURACIL (Efudex/Carac/Tolak)

Actinic keratoses (AKs), also known as solar keratoses, are scaly or crusty growths. These lesions can be precursors to squamous cell carcinoma and are known as a “precancers.” AK’s most often appear on the bald scalp, face, ears, lips, backs of the hands and forearms, shoulders, neck or any other areas of the body frequently exposed to the sun. Commonly, they appear as red, scaly crusts, but many can be invisible or smooth to the touch. For this reason, using a topical treatment for AK’s can be superior to freezing with liquid nitrogen. There are several topical fluorouracil medications. Carac and Tolak are used once daily, while Efudex is used twice a day and comes in a generic form.

### **Basic instructions:**

1. Clean the area where you will apply the medication. Rinse well and dry the area with a towel.
2. Apply a thin layer of the cream to the treatment areas, using your fingertips. Use enough to cover the affected skin.
3. Avoid contact with your eyes, nostrils, and mouth.
4. Wash your hands as after applying medication.
5. A moisturizer/sunscreen may be applied 1 hour after the medication has been applied. You may use other skin products including creams, lotions, or cosmetics throughout the treatment process.
6. Use once (Carac/Tolak) daily, and twice daily for all others, for approximately 14 days or as indicated by prescriber. Lips may need only 10 days of treatment for the desired result. For lesions on the scalp or extremities, treatment up to 21 days may be necessary.

Fluorouracil creams are effective treatments for AK’s. They target the sun damaged cells, causing inflammation and the destruction of both visible and invisible lesions. Applying topical fluorouracil to normal skin would result in very little to no irritation. Treatment leaves the affected area temporarily reddened, raw and can cause some discomfort resulting from skin breakdown. This is not an allergic reaction. Subclinical lesions not previously appreciated may also become inflamed during therapy. The more raw and inflamed the skin becomes, the better the end result. If at any time during treatment you are concerned with the reaction, please feel free to call our office and make an appointment.