

A number of medications are being used for keratoses and some may be helpful for **skin** cancers as well. Besides cryotherapy, 5-fluorouracil is the other most commonly used treatment for actinic keratoses. Other medications are also available.

Medications for Keratoses and Common Skin Cancers			
Medication	Skin Conditions Affected	Oral or Topical	Comments
5-Fluorouracil	Actinic keratoses, Bowen's disease and small nonmelanoma skin cancers.	Topical cream (Efudex, Fluoroplex) or injected gel containing 5-FU and epinephrine (AccuSite).	5-Fluorouracil (5-FU) removes actinic keratoses and is useful for some patients with a large number of lesions. It requires twice daily application for three to four weeks. Can cause significant redness, irritation, swelling, and crusting, which takes two to four weeks to heal. Newer preparations are reducing these side effects. It is still unclear if this medication protects against recurrent keratoses or future skin cancer. Of concern is the possibility that (5-FU) will clear the top of a skin cancer and obscure the rest of the cancer that lies beneath the surface of the skin . A 10-year 2003 study of patients with Bowen's disease, reported that 5-FU was safe and effective, with only 2 out of 26 cancers recurring.
Masoprocol (Actinex)	Actinic keratoses.	Topical cream applied twice a day.	Have cancer-fighting properties. Side effects, including itching and redness, can be as severe as those from 5-fluorouracil.
Diclofenac and hyaluronan (Solaraze)	Actinic keratoses (approved). Investigated for basal cell.	Topical gel applied twice a day.	Diclofenac is a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). When used to treat actinic keratoses, it is delivered to the skin with hyaluronan, a water-seeking molecule that helps maintain skin tension. Healing may not be evident until a month after treatment ends. It has modest effects and when healing occurs, it may not be evident for at least a month after treatment ends. However, it causes less irritation than 5-FU and may be useful for some people.
Imiquimod (Aldara)	Investigated for basal cell carcinoma, actinic keratoses, Bowen's disease, and squamous cell carcinomas .	Imiquimod is a topical cream.	Imiquimod (Aldara) induces production of immune factors that help fight cell proliferation. It has good cosmetic results and is showing promise for actinic keratoses and for basal cell carcinoma (BCCs). One study, in fact, suggested it may prove to be an alternative to surgery for small, low-risk BCCs. However, long-term cure rates are not known.
Alpha-Interferons	Basal cell carcinoma , squamous cell carcinoma .	Require injections administered three times a week.	Interferons are immune factors that are being used to treat a number of serious conditions. Alpha-interferon injections may be effective against skin cancers that are hard to treat using conventional surgical measures. Cosmetic results reported to be good or very good by 83% of patients.

