

Skin care routine while taking isotretinoin

Information for patients

This leaflet provides practical advice to patients who are undergoing treatment for their acne with oral Isotretinoin. It will help them with the different products needed to moisturise skin and mucosal areas and include names of over the counter products that they can buy.

Dry skin

It is very common to experience dry skin and chapped lips when taking isotretinoin. This is not harmful, but may be a little uncomfortable. Tips for managing dryness secondary to isotretinoin include:

- Using an emollient (moisturiser) on affected areas or all over after showering daily. Examples of emollients that can be purchased over-the-counter include Cerave or Cetaphil.
- **Using only 'oil-free emollients'** on acne-prone areas (face, chest and back). Check that the label of your product says either 'oil-free' or 'non comedogenic', e.g. Cetaphil Oil-Free moisturiser.
- Using a lip balm regularly throughout the day. Examples of lip balms that can be purchased over-the-counter are Blistex, Burt's Bees or Eucerin Aquaphor balm. Vaseline alone is not enough to hydrate the lips as it acts more just as a barrier rather than moisturising the lips.
- Take short, cool showers and avoid using liquid or bar soap in the shower. Instead, any simple emollient can be used like a liquid soap in the shower.

Other tips for preventing irritation of the skin during isotretinoin treatment include:

- Not having dermabrasion or laser skin treatment while on isotretinoin or for six months afterwards.
- Shave, rather than wax bodily hair.

Occasionally, patients being treated with isotretinoin may develop a mild eczema (itchy, red rash). This should resolve once treatment is stopped. While on treatment, it can be managed with emollients and mild topical steroids. Please speak to your general practitioner or dermatologist if you experience symptoms such as this.

Dry eyes

Patients taking isotretinoin may experience mild eye dryness, which can cause a gritty feeling in the eyes or mild blurred vision. Artificial tears such as Viscotears, which can be purchased over-the-counter, may help. If symptoms do not abate, review by an eye specialist may be required.

Dry nasal passages

Patients taking isotretinoin may experience minor nosebleeds due to dryness of the nasal mucous membranes (internal lining of the nostrils). If this occurs, Vaseline can be applied to the nasal passages twice daily. In addition, an over-the-counter nasal saline spray, e.g. Sterimar, can be used several times per day.

Sun sensitivity

Isotretinoin can increase skin's sensitivity to the sun and make it more likely that you will experience sunburn. Tips for managing sun-sensitivity secondary to isotretinoin in the UK include:

- Applying sunscreen daily from March/April until September using a product that provides sun protection factor 30 or 50 with ultraviolet A protection (four or more stars). Over-the-counter brands available in the UK include Sensense and La Roche-Posay Anthelios lotion. Remember, these **should be oil-free** on acne-prone skin.
- Following usual sun protection advice, including covering up with suitable clothing when outdoors and avoiding the sun when it is at its strongest (typically between 11am and 3pm).

Please note, the named products listed are readily available but there are similar ones.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams. The PALS office is located on the ground floor of the Hambleton Wing, near the main entrance on Bessemer Road - staff will be happy to direct you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: 020 3299 3601 Email: kch-tr.palsdh@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Communications and Interpreting telephone line on 020 3299 4826 or email kch-tr.accessibility@nhs.net

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