

Topical treatments for basal cell carcinoma (BCC)

Amber King

The following treatments are used when the BCC is small and has not spread deeply. They are directly applied to the skin, making them less invasive than surgery. However, they may not be effective for all types of BCCs, and in some cases, alternative treatments such as surgery or radiation may be necessary.

1. **Imiquimod:** This cream assists the body's immune system in fighting cancer cells. It is applied directly to the skin where the cancer is located. Studies have shown its effectiveness for certain types of BCCs [1].
2. **5-Fluorouracil (5-FU):** This cream is applied to the skin, and halts the growth of cancer cells by interfering with their DNA. It is particularly useful for some types of BCCs, especially those that are only in the superficial layers of the skin [2].
3. **Diclofenac:** This gel contains a medication that reduces inflammation and can eliminate cancer cells. It is applied directly to the skin where the BCC is present [3].
4. **Ingenol mebutate:** Derived from a plant extract, this gel targets certain types of BCCs by directly killing cancer cells when applied to the skin [4].
5. **Photodynamic therapy (PDT):** This treatment involves applying a special liquid to the skin followed by exposure to a special light. It aids in destroying cancer cells. PDT can be beneficial for specific types of BCCs, particularly those on the face [5].

References:

1. Geisse J, Caro I, Lindholm J, Golitz L, Stampone P, Owens M. Imiquimod 5% cream for the treatment of superficial basal cell carcinoma: results from two phase III, randomized, vehicle-controlled studies. *J Am Acad Dermatol.* 2004;50(5):722-733.
2. Gupta AK, Paquet M. Network meta-analysis of the outcome 'participant complete clearance' in non-immunosuppressed participants of eight interventions for actinic keratosis: a follow-up on a Cochrane review. *Br J Dermatol.* 2013;169(2):250-259.
3. Tarstedt M, Rosdahl I. Complete regression of keratoacanthomas with topical 3% diclofenac in hyaluronan. *Br J Dermatol.* 2002;147(1):140-141.
4. Dreier J, Cheng PF, Bogdan Alleman I, Gugger A, Hafner J, Cazzaniga S. Safety and efficacy of ingenol mebutate in treating actinic keratosis and nonmelanoma skin cancer. *Patient Prefer Adherence.* 2017;11:489-499.
5. Morton CA, McKenna KE, Rhodes LE; British Association of Dermatologists Therapy Guidelines and Audit Subcommittee and the British Photodermatology

Group. Guidelines for topical photodynamic therapy: update. Br J Dermatol. 2008;159(6):1245-1266.