Bexarotene Gel (Targretin® Gel Formulation)

Pronounced: beks-AIR-oh-teen

Classification: Retinoid

About Bexarotene Gel (Targretin® Gel Formulation)

Bexarotene belongs to a class of medications called retinoids. Retinoids are relatives of vitamin A and appear to interfere with genes that control cell growth. The exact way bexarotene works is unknown, but it is believed to inhibit the growth of tumor cells.

How to Take Bexarotene (Gel Formulation)

Bexarotene gel formulation is applied to the skin. When starting to use this medication, it should be used once every other day for the first week. The frequency should be increased on a weekly basis or as directed by your care provider to once a day, then twice a day, then three times a day, and finally, four times a day.

How to Apply:

- Apply the gel using a clean, washed finger. Apply a generous coating over the surface of each lesion, trying not to apply gel to the healthy skin around the lesion. This will help reduce redness and irritation to healthy skin.
- Immediately after applying the gel, wipe the finger with a tissue and wash with soap and water.
- Allow the gel to dry for 5-10 minutes before covering it with clothing. Avoid covering with gauze or bandages.
- Use a non-deodorant soap when bathing and wait at least 20 minutes after a shower or bath to apply the gel. Avoid getting the area wet (bathing, swimming) for 3 hours after applying.
- Do not apply to mucosal surfaces, including eyes, nostrils, mouth, vagina, the tip of penis, rectum, or anus.
- Do not use insect repellants or other products that contain DEET while using this gel.

Where do I get this medication?

Bexarotene gel formulation is available through retail/mail-order pharmacies. Your oncology team will work with your prescription drug plan to identify an in-network retail/mail order pharmacy for medication distribution.

Storage and Handling

Store your medication in the original, labeled container at room temperature and in a dry location (unless otherwise directed by your HCP or Pharmacist). Keep containers out of reach of children and pets.

If a caregiver helps you apply the medication, they should consider wearing gloves or dispense the gel directly into your hand for application. They should always wash their hands before and after touching the medication. Pregnant or nursing women should not touch this medication. Ask your oncology team where to return any unused medication for disposal. Do not throw in the trash.

Insurance Information

Certain cancer medications are only available through specialty pharmacies. If you need to get this medication through a specialty pharmacy, your provider will help you start this process. Where you can fill your prescriptions may also be influenced
by your prescription drug coverage. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist for assistance in identifying where you can get this medication.

**Safety Considerations When Receiving Bexarotene**

- Vitamin A supplements can worsen the side effects of bexarotene. The manufacturer recommends limiting vitamin A supplementation to less than 15,000 IU/day, but you should discuss taking any vitamin supplements with your doctor BEFORE you take them.
- Bexarotene can cause harm to a fetus (unborn baby). Men and women should not become pregnant (or father a child). Two methods of effective contraception are recommended for women of childbearing potential for one month before starting, during therapy, and one month after completing therapy. Discuss with your doctor when you may safely become pregnant after therapy.
- Men should use condoms during sexual activity during therapy and for one month after completing therapy to protect their partner from exposure to the medication and prevent them from becoming pregnant.

**Possible Side Effects of Bexarotene Gel Formulation**

There are a number of things you can do to manage the side effects of bexarotene gel formulation. Talk to your care team about these recommendations. They can help you decide what will work best for you. These are some of the most common or important side effects:

**Skin Changes**

While using this gel, your skin may develop redness, itching, burning, irritation, and scaling in the area of application. Make sure to apply the medication only to the affected areas and avoid healthy skin. Your skin will be more sensitive to the sun, which can result in severe sunburn or rash. Sun sensitivity can last even after you stop taking the medication. Avoid the sun as much as possible, as even a little exposure can cause a burn. Do not use a sunlamp or tanning bed. Wear sunglasses and long sleeves/pants to protect your skin and eyes. Talk to your healthcare provider before using topical lotions and moisturizers as these may interfere with the medication if applied to the same areas.

**Sun Sensitivity**

This medication can make your skin more sensitive to the sun, which can result in severe sunburn or rash. Sun sensitivity can last even after chemotherapy is completed. Avoid the sun between 10-2 pm, when it is strongest. Wear sunscreen (at least SPF 15) every day; wear sunglasses, a hat, and long sleeves/pants to protect your skin and seek out shade whenever possible.

**Reproductive Concerns**

As noted above, exposure of an unborn child to this medication could cause birth defects, so you should not become pregnant or father a child while on this medication. Effective birth control is necessary 1 month before starting the medication, during treatment, and for at least 1 month after treatment. Even if your menstrual cycle stops or you believe you are not producing sperm, you could still be fertile and conceive. You should not breastfeed while using this medication.

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