

PICATO (ingenol mebutate)

Picato is a new topical treatment for actinic keratoses. As you know from prior information, actinic keratoses are precancerous skin lesions which may develop into squamous cell skin cancer. Picato is an interesting product, as it was developed from a naturally occurring substance. In Australia, there is a plant called petty spurge. It was well known that if the sap of this plant was applied to warts and various growths on the skin they would often become inflamed, fall off, and disappear completely. A company in Australia recognized this property and developed the active ingredient from the petty spurge plant. This ingredient is called ingenol mebutate and now carries the trade name of Picato.

Picato come in a 0.015% concentration for the face and scalp. This product is used once per day for 3 days. The prescription comes in a box containing the 3 small tubes. It is best to store these tubes in the refrigerator. The medication insert states that the medication should be disposed of after use but it is safe to store and reuse any leftover medicine in the future if the entire tube is not used.

The medication is applied once per day for 3 days to the affected area. A small drop is applied and rubbed in completely. Avoid your eyes and wash your hands after the application. Do not exercise immediately after applying Picato since the sweat can cause the product to spread to other areas. Do not cover the treated area with a bandage. After 6 hours the area can be washed off if you wish.

The most common side effect of the use of Picato is local irritation in the area. A small amount of irritation is expected. This can be itching, redness, slight swelling and occasional crusting and/or blistering. A minor reaction often begins in the first day and the reaction peaks usually in 7 days. The reaction is normally completely over within 2 weeks.

A major advantage of this treatment is it can eliminate all the actinic keratoses both visible and invisible in the affected treatment area. The majority of patients see regression of the actinic keratoses within 2 months of treatment. The use of this product will often avoid more destructive treatment such as liquid nitrogen, freezing, or surgical removal of the growth.

If you have any other questions regarding the use of Picato, please ask me before you leave the office.