

Dermatology

Fumaric Acid Esters (Fumaderm)

Information for patients



Fumaderm is a drug used to treat severe psoriasis. It is widely used in Europe, but is not licensed in the UK. However, this does not mean it is unsafe to use.

How does it work?

Fumaric acid esters (the active ingredient in Fumaderm) work on the immune system, but do not suppress it like some other treatments for psoriasis (e.g. ciclosporin, methotrexate).

How do I take Fumaderm?

Fumaderm tablets come in two different strengths. You will be started on one low strength tablet (Fumaderm Initial) per day and will gradually increase this dose up to three tablets per day.

You will then be switched to the full strength tablet (Fumaderm), starting with one a day, and will increase this dose to a maximum of two full strength tablets, three times a day. The dose is increased slowly because of potential side effects that can occur.

Please see the timetable below, which you can follow so you know when to increase the doses and when to change to the full strength tablets.

Week	Tablets	Morning	Noon	Evening
1	Fumaderm Initial			1
2	Fumaderm Initial	1		1
3	Fumaderm Initial	1	1	1
4	Fumaderm			1
5	Fumaderm	1		1
6	Fumaderm	1	1	1
7	Fumaderm	1	1	2
8	Fumaderm	2	1	2
9	Fumaderm	2	2	2
On-going	Fumaderm	2	2	2

How long will I need to take the tablets for?

Fumaderm can be used either as a short course for four months, which can be repeated, or as a long term treatment over many months or even years.

What are the side effects of taking Fumaderm?

- The most common side effects are stomach cramps, nausea and diarrhoea, but these usually improve with time.
- You may have flushing (redness), itching, or a burning sensation of your skin, but these symptoms will also usually improve with time.
- You may feel tired, dizzy or have headaches.
- Blood test checks may show an abnormal result (usually for liver, kidney or blood count). These return to normal when you stop taking the tablets.
- Very rarely there have been reports of people taking Fumaderm developing a viral infection which can affect the brain.

How long does the medicine take to work?

Most people notice an improvement after the first four to six weeks.

What monitoring needs to be done?

Before starting the treatment you will need to have a blood test, to check your liver, kidneys and blood count. You will also need to have a urine test, to check that you do not have a urine infection.

Once you have started the treatment you will need to have these tests repeated every two weeks for the first four weeks, then monthly for six months (or until the end of the four month short course treatment), then every two months for the remainder of the treatment.

Are there any reasons why I should not take Fumaderm?

You should not take Fumaderm if any of the following apply to you:

- you have severe stomach or bowel problems (e.g. gastric ulcer)
- you have severe liver or kidney disease
- you have any blood disorder
- you are (or could be) pregnant or are breast feeding.

Your doctor will have checked your medical notes before prescribing you this information, but please let them know if you think any of these factors apply to you.

Will Fumaderm affect my other medications?

You should not take Fumaderm if you are on any tablets that suppress your immune system (such as methotrexate or ciclosporin) or if you are having light treatment (phototherapy).

Please tell your GP or other health professionals that you are taking Fumaderm if they want to start you on any new medication.

Further information

You can find more information about this medication on the following websites:

British Association of Dermatologists

Patient information leaflets about skin problems and treatments, including fumaric acid esters.

Website: www.bad.org.uk/for-the-public/patient-information-leaflets

DermNet New Zealand

Patient information leaflet on fumaric acid esters:

Website: www.dermnetnz.org/treatments/fumaric-acid-esters.html

How to contact us

If you have any further questions about this medication please contact the Dermatology Department where you were seen, either by letter (addressed to your consultant) or by telephone:

Dermatology Department

The Churchill Hospital
Old Road
Oxford
OX3 7LJ

Tel: **01865 228 224** or **01865 222 8274**

(Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 5.00pm – answerphone available)

Or

Dermatology Department

Horton General Hospital
Oxford Road
Banbury
OX16 9AL

Tel: **01295 229 683**

(Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 5.00pm – answerphone available)

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

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