

Understanding and Managing Treatment-Related Acneiform Rash

What is an acneiform rash?

- Acneiform rash (also called acne-like rash) looks like acne, with raised red bumps, redness, and irritation.
 - Despite the similar appearance, it should not be treated with acne medications.
- It most often occurs on the face, chest, back, arms, and scalp.

What should I know about acneiform rash?

- It is a common side effect of cancer treatments that block the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR).
- The acne-like rash often starts within the first 2 to 4 weeks of treatment.
- At first it may feel warm, tender, or like a burning sensation. It may then turn red and feel swollen.
- Eventually, you may experience raised bumps, sometimes called papules or pustules, that crust over and become very dry, itchy, or painful.
- Severe acneiform rash may lead to infection if not properly managed.
 - Your skin may also be more prone to sunburn.
- Acneiform rash can change your appearance, which may affect your body image and cause discomfort or depression.

What puts me at risk of experiencing acneiform rash?

- Men may be more likely to develop an acneiform rash.
- The rash is typically worse with higher doses of EGFR blockers.
 - Developing an acneiform rash may mean that your cancer might respond better to the treatment you are receiving.

How is acneiform rash identified, evaluated, or diagnosed?

- It may occur after starting treatment that blocks EGFR.
- It can present as papules and/or pustules.
- It may be tender and itchy.

What steps can I take to prevent or handle an acneiform rash?

Do:

- Apply a daily moisturizing cream to the skin at least twice daily.
- Use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 when outside
- Gently clean your skin with mild soap and warm water, then pat it dry.
- Ask your care team if they recommend any of the following:
 - An over-the-counter steroid cream to be used on the skin
 - An antihistamine to help with itching

Avoid:

- Long hot showers—they can irritate and dry out skin.
- Lotions that contain alcohol or fragrance.
- Prolonged direct sun exposure.
- Using benzoyl peroxide or retinoid cream—they may worsen the irritation.

What might my care team provide to help?

- To help prevent severe acneiform rash, your care team may prescribe:
 - Antibiotics
 - Topical steroids or antibiotic creams
- Before starting treatment with an EGFR blocker, your care team should carefully look over your skin and note any areas that already show any signs of bumps, redness, or tenderness.
- At each visit after starting treatment, this should be repeated to note any signs of skin changes.
- You should also carefully examine your skin each day to look for early signs of changes.

When should I call my care team?

- At the first signs of a rash that looks like acne after starting treatment with an EGFR blocker.
- If any areas of rash show signs of drainage, pus, or open sores.
- If your rash becomes so severe that it limits your ability to do your normal daily activities or sleep at night.
- If your rash is causing you to feel depressed.

How can I tell if my acneiform rash is getting better?

- It may take up to 4 weeks for the rash to improve.
- Signs of improvement include:
 - Decreased redness and tenderness
 - Bumps start to dry and crust over
 - You may still see discoloration where the rash used to be

What questions should I ask my care team about acneiform rash?

- How should I track my symptoms? What do you recommend?
- Do any of my other medical conditions increase my chance of experiencing acne-like rash?
- Do you recommend any changes to my medications to help prevent or control acne-like rash?
- What lifestyle changes can help me prevent or manage my acne-like rash?
- What are my options if I can't control my rash while getting cancer treatment?

Where can I find out more information about acneiform rash?

Hair, Skin, and Nail Problems | American Cancer Society

- <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/hair-skin-nails.html>

Rashes and Skin Changes | Cancer.Net

- <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/hair-skin-nails/rashes-skin-changes.html>

Skin and Nail Changes During Cancer Treatment | National Cancer Institute

- <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/side-effects/skin-nail-changes>

Notes

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Scan the QR code below to access this education sheet.



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