



Question: What guidance is available to support the topical administration of metronidazole in the management of malodorous wounds?

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There is limited information available to support the topical administration of metronidazole in the management of malodorous wounds. Topical metronidazole preparations are not licensed in Ireland for the management of malodorous wounds.¹

In the management of malodorous fungating cancer, topical metronidazole can be considered when²:

- the cancer is relatively small
- the cancer is very sloughy and poorly vascularized (which will reduce systemic absorption of metronidazole)
- systemic therapy is impractical e.g. because of dysphagia
- systemic therapy causes unacceptable undesirable effects²

Although high quality randomised controlled trial (RCT) evidence of topical use is limited, most patients find benefit with approximately 50% of patients reporting complete control of the odour.² Improvement is reported to generally occur within 2 days but can take up to one month.²

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Topical Administration

- 0.75% metronidazole gel is commercially available (e.g. Metrogel®). In the UK, Metrogel® is licensed for the deodorisation of the smell associated with malodorous fungating tumours.³ It is recommended that a thin layer is applied to the affected area twice daily.³
- As a cheaper alternative to commercial gels, some centres use a crushed 200mg tablet in lubricating gel.² A metronidazole 200mg tablet may be crushed and mixed in KY jelly or 2% lidocaine jelly.⁴ When applied to the ulcerated area; benefit is often noticed within 12 hours.⁴
- Paul et al conducted a literature review to summarise research findings about topical metronidazole used to decrease wound odour.⁵ Generally, topical metronidazole was reported to result in a reduction or eradication of wound odour, decrease in wound drainage, improvement in wound appearance, decrease in surrounding cellulitis, halting of tissue necrosis, and decrease in pain.⁵ They report that although nurses report success with sprinkling crushed metronidazole pills on wounds, no published reports of this method of topical application are available.⁵
- A Cochrane review of topical agents for fungating wounds reported that one small study compared the use of topical metronidazole with placebo.⁶ The results of the study suggested that metronidazole gel might be useful in reducing malodour however they were not statistically significant.⁶

References

- 1) Summary of Product Characteristics Metrogel 0.75% w/w Gel. Available from www.hpra.ie. Accessed on the 11/04/2017.
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- 4) Twycross R, Wilcock A, Stark Toller C. Symptom Management in Advanced Cancer 4th Edition. Palliativedrugs.com. 2009. Page 345

- 5) Paul JC and Pieper BA. Topical metronidazole for the treatment of wound odor: a review of the literature. *Ostomy Wound Manage.* 2008 Mar; 54(3):18-27.
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- 6) Adderley UJ and Holt IGS. Topical agents and dressings for fungating wounds. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2014, Issue 5.