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IN BRIEF

OTC Differin Epiduo Gel for Acne

Differin Epiduo gel (Galderma), a fixed-dose combination of the synthetic retinoid adapalene 0.1% and the oxidizing agent benzoyl peroxide 2.5%, is now available over the counter (OTC) for topical treatment of acne in patients ≥ 12 years old. It will remain available by prescription for use in patients 9-11 years old. A gel containing adapalene 0.3% and benzoyl peroxide 2.5% (*Epiduo Forte*, and generics) is available by prescription for use in patients ≥ 12 years old.

PHARMACOLOGY – Topical retinoids are often used for initial treatment of acne, either alone or in combination with a topical antibiotic or topical benzoyl peroxide, which also has antibacterial activity. Adapalene modulates keratinization, inflammation, and differentiation of follicular epithelial cells, decreasing formation of comedones and inflammatory lesions. Retinoid/antimicrobial combinations are more effective than either component alone, particularly in patients with inflammatory acne.^{1,2}

CLINICAL STUDIES – In clinical trials, significantly more patients with acne achieved clear or almost clear skin with adapalene 0.1%/benzoyl peroxide 2.5% than with its individual components alone; significant differences in total lesion counts were detectable within 1 week (median total lesion count decreased by 51% with the combination and by about 35% with adapalene or benzoyl peroxide alone).³

ADVERSE EFFECTS – All retinoids can cause erythema, dryness, scaling, burning, and pruritus, but adapalene is generally better tolerated than other topical retinoids. Pruritus and burning, which are most severe immediately after application of *Differin Epiduo* gel, usually decrease over time. Benzoyl peroxide can cause irritation and allergic contact dermatitis. It can also bleach hair and colored fabrics. Retinoids are teratogenic; even though only small amounts of topical retinoids are absorbed systemically, they should not be used during pregnancy.

ADMINISTRATION – *Differin Epiduo* gel is available in 15- and 45-gram pump bottles. A thin layer of the gel should be applied to affected areas once daily. Patients should minimize exposure to sunlight and use sunscreen. ■

1. Drugs for acne. *Med Lett Drugs Ther* 2024; 66:17.
2. RV Reynolds et al. Guidelines of care for the management of acne vulgaris. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2024; 90:1006.e1.
3. DM Thiboutot et al. Adapalene-benzoyl peroxide, a fixed-dose combination for the treatment of acne vulgaris: results of a multicenter, randomized double-blind, controlled study. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2007; 57:791.

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