



## Patient Information Leaflet: Hydrochlorothiazide and Your Skin

### What is Hydrochlorothiazide?

Hydrochlorothiazide is a medication commonly used to treat high blood pressure and fluid retention (oedema). It belongs to a class of drugs called thiazide diuretics, which help the body remove excess salt and water. You may be on the drug on its own or take it combination with another blood pressure agent.

### What is the Risk to My Skin?

Recent studies have shown that long-term use of hydrochlorothiazide may increase the risk of **non-melanoma skin cancer**, particularly **squamous cell carcinoma (SCC)** and **basal cell carcinoma (BCC)**. This risk appears to be **dose-dependent**, meaning the longer and higher the dose of hydrochlorothiazide taken, the greater the potential risk.

### How Does Hydrochlorothiazide Increase Skin Cancer Risk?

Hydrochlorothiazide has **photosensitizing properties**, which means it can make the skin more sensitive to sunlight and ultraviolet (UV) rays. This increased sensitivity may contribute to the development of skin cancer over time.

### What Can You Do to Protect Yourself?

If you are taking hydrochlorothiazide, consider the following precautions:

- **Regularly check your skin** for any new or changing moles, lesions, or unusual spots.
- **Limit sun exposure**, especially during peak hours (10 AM–4 PM).
- **Use sun protection**, including broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher), protective clothing, hats, and sunglasses.
- **Discuss alternatives** with your doctor if you have a history of skin cancer or are concerned about the risk.

### Should You Stop Taking Hydrochlorothiazide?

Do not stop taking hydrochlorothiazide without consulting your doctor. The benefits of controlling blood pressure and preventing fluid retention outweigh the risks for most patients. If you have concerns, speak with your healthcare provider about possible alternatives. If you notice any suspicious skin changes, seek medical advice promptly.