

PUVA Light Treatment

Dermatology

Patient Information Leaflet

Following your consultation, you have been referred for PUVA light therapy. Below are some questions frequently asked by our patients, the answers will help you understand the treatment.

What is PUVA?

UVA is a form of ultraviolet light that comes from the sun. PUVA phototherapy involves taking a medication called Psoralen (P), after which you are exposed to UVA wavelengths (PUVA).

What is Psoralen?

Psoralen is a medication which temporarily makes your skin more sensitive to light. This enables the UVA rays to penetrate the skin more effectively. Psoralen also makes your eyes more light sensitive. You need to wear protective sunglasses as soon as you have taken your Psoralen tablets and for the 12 hours following. The Phototherapy nurse will discuss with you the type of sunglasses needed.

How much Psoralen do I take?

The amount of Psoralen that you need to take will depend on your height and weight. Prior to your treatment date, the dosage will be calculated and prescribed. On the day of treatment, you need to take your Psoralen tablets 2 hours before your appointment time.

The tablets should be taken with a light meal, and not on an empty stomach.

How long will my treatment last?

It is necessary for you to attend twice weekly on Tuesday and Friday between 1 p.m and 5:30 p.m. The course of treatment will last for approximately ten weeks, depending on your response. Please try to be prompt, as appointments are spaced at thirty minute intervals and arriving late may result in losing your appointment.

What does my treatment involve?

On your first visit, the nurse assesses your skin. The light therapy procedure will be explained and you can ask questions. You will step inside the treatment cabinet or be asked to place your hands and feet on a unit containing a row of fluorescent tubes. A carefully measured dose of UVA light is administered. The first treatment lasts approximately 1 minute. It will usually increase at each visit as your skin can tolerate more light. It is important that you wear the protective goggles provided throughout your exposure in the cabinet.

What do I need to wear?

If you are treated in the full body cabinet, female patients may remove all clothing but male patients need to protect their genitalia. Dark coloured underwear must be worn. You must wear the same style throughout the treatment course, as once the area has been shielded from the light, any sudden exposure to the light may cause sunburn. Before attending, avoid applying cosmetics, perfumed substances, or aftershave, as these can cause the skin to be sensitive to the light.

Are there any side effects to PUVA treatment?

During the course of light treatment, you may experience a mild sunburn reaction, skin dryness or increased itching. These can be alleviated with frequent applications of a water based moisturiser. Occasionally, if the itching becomes severe, it may become necessary to prescribe an antihistamine. Psoralen makes the skin sensitive to light for up to 48 hours. After treatment, keep the treated areas covered and out of the sun for 48 hours.

Please discuss any side effects, however slight, with the nurse who will advise you on the best course of action. In some cases, the Psoralen can make you feel nauseous. If this happens, please inform the nurse, as it may be possible to prescribe you with anti-sickness tablets.

What are the long term risks of PUVA treatment?

Patients who are given repeated doses of light treatment, or have received light treatment for a prolonged period of time, are at greater risk of premature skin ageing and the development of skin cancers. Every effort is made to minimise these risks by carefully monitoring exposure and the number of doses given.

Is PUVA safe during pregnancy?

It is recommended that patients avoid conception during PUVA therapy and although no problems have been reported, pregnant and breastfeeding ladies should avoid having PUVA treatment. If you have any concerns, please discuss these with the phototherapy nurse.

Will sunbathing speed up my treatment?

No. It is extremely important to avoid sunbathing or using sun beds during your course of treatment, as you will increase the risk of burning. On bright sunny days, it will be necessary to cover the areas normally exposed to sun with clothes or high factor sun cream.

Should I stop using my topical treatments?

The phototherapy nurse will discuss your topical treatments with you. Some creams and ointments could make your skin more sensitive than usual to the light treatment. Please inform the nurse of any creams or ointments you have been prescribed.

Should I continue taking my current medication?

Some medication could make your skin more sensitive than usual to the light treatment. It is therefore advisable to inform the nurse of any medication you are currently taking. If you are currently taking Warfarin medication you must inform the phototherapy nurse.

Alcohol consumption should be avoided on the days you attend for PUVA.

If you cannot attend your appointment, please contact the Phototherapy room: **Tel:** (01524) 583167

If the Phototherapy nurse is not available, please leave a message on the answer machine. If you regularly fail to attend appointments, it may be necessary to cancel your course of treatment.

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Other formats

If you would like to receive this information in an alternative format, then please contact : 01539 795497.

Travelling to our hospitals

For the best way to plan your journey visit our website:
<http://www.UHMB.nhs.uk/> or contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS): 01539 795497.

Useful Contact Details

NHS 111 (for 24 hour urgent health advice): telephone 111

Your Information

If you would like to know how we use, share, disclose and secure your information and your rights of access to the information we hold about you, visit the Trust's website: <http://www.UHMB.nhs.uk/> or contact Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01539 795497.

Evidence

Details of the evidence used in writing this leaflet are available on request from: Patient Information Officer at 01524 512476.

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment, please speak to a member of staff or contact PALS on 01539 795497.

UHMBT is a no smoking Trust. Smoking is not permitted on any of the hospital sites. You can contact the NHS North Lancashire Stop Smoking services on the number below:

NHS Quit Squad - **0800 328 6297**

If you live in Cumbria, please call **0300 013 3000** to find a local pharmacy who are offers 1-2-1 support and nicotine replacement therapy.

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