

# Hand and Foot PUVA Light Treatment

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**Dermatology**

**Patient Information Leaflet**

Following your consultation, you have been referred for UVA light therapy. Below are some questions frequently asked by our patients. The answers will help you understand this form of treatment.

### **What is hand and foot PUVA?**

This treatment involves soaking your hands and/or feet in a solution; after which, the skin is exposed to wavelengths of light known as UVA. The purpose of the solution is to make the skin more sensitive to the light.

### **What does PUVA stand for?**

The bathing solution is known as Psoralen (P) and UVA is the type of wavelengths that you will be exposed to (PUVA).

### **How long will my treatment last?**

It will be necessary for you to attend twice a week for approximately 10 weeks. Treatment days are on Tuesdays and Fridays between the hours of 1pm and 5.30pm. Please try to be prompt, as appointments are spaced at 30 minute intervals and arriving late may result in you losing your appointment.

### **What does my treatment involve?**

On your first visit, the phototherapy nurse will assess your skin. You will be asked a few simple questions concerning your skin. The light therapy procedure will then be explained and you will have the opportunity to ask any questions.

Your hands and/or feet will then be soaked in a warm solution for 15 minutes. You will need to move your hands and feet slowly in the water whilst soaking to ensure even distribution of the solution. After removal from the solution you will be given a towel to pat dry your hands and feet. After a further 15 minute wait, you will place your hands and/or feet on a unit containing a row of special fluorescent tubes and a carefully measured dosage of ultra violet light will be given.

## **Are there any side effects to PUVA treatment?**

It is possible that during the course of light treatment, you may experience a mild sunburn reaction. Should this happen, frequent applications of a water based moisturiser should sooth the skin and reduce the redness.

Other possible side effects are skin dryness and increased itching. Again, these can be alleviated with frequent applications of a 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 hands and feet covered and out of the sun for 48 hours. Please discuss any side effects, however slight, with the phototherapy nurse who will advise you on the best course of action.

## **What are the long term risks of PUVA treatment?**

Patients who are given repeated doses of light treatment, or who have been receiving 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 the amount of exposures you receive and the number of doses given.

## **Will sunbathing help 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.

## **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.

## **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.

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

If you are unable to 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 your appointments without informing the Phototherapy nurse, it may be necessary to cancel your course of treatment.

## **Leaflet Details**

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## **Other formats**

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

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<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**

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## **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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