

Bath PUVA light treatment

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 bath PUVA?

This treatment involves bathing in a solution after which, the skin is exposed to wavelengths of light known as UVA. The purpose of the bath 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 course of 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. You will be shown the exact amount of water to run into the bath and given the correct amount of solution to add to the water.

Once in the bath, you must slowly move the water around to ensure even distribution of the solution and you must remain in the bath for exactly 15 minutes. Following the bath you will then stand in a specially designed cabinet and a carefully measured dosage of UVA light will be administered. Following your treatment, it is important to avoid sunlight for 48 hours.

What do I need to wear?

You should wear dark coloured underwear and 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 to that area. Female patients may remove all clothing, but males must protect their genitalia. Prior to attending avoid applying cosmetics, perfumed substances, or aftershave, as these can cause the skin to be sensitive to the light. Long hair should be tied up.

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. On bright sunny days, it will be necessary to cover the areas normally exposed to sun with clothes or high factor sun cream.

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 soothe 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. 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.

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.

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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.

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