

# Iontophoresis

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**Dermatology**

**Patient Information Leaflet**

## **Why have I been referred for iontophoresis?**

Iontophoresis is a treatment for hyperhidrosis (excessive sweating) of the hands/feet and underarms.

The iontophoresis machine passes a low intensity electric current through water and onto the skin. It is not understood how this works but it has a success rate of 85% for the hands and feet and around 70% for underarms.

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

You will need to attend the nurse-led day care clinic seven times over a period of four weeks.(mornings only available)

Week one: Monday/Tuesday/Thursday

Week two: Monday/Thursday

Week three: Tuesday

Week four: Tuesday

Your first appointment will be approximately one hour. The others will be thirty minutes each. It is important to attend each appointment as we follow a fixed regime. If you cannot attend an appointment we may need to discontinue treatment.

## **What happens during my treatment?**

If your hands and feet are to be treated, they will be placed in shallow trays of tap water which are connected to the iontophoresis machine. The machine sends a low voltage current through the trays of water. The nurse will gradually increase the strength of the current until you feel mild tingling/pins and needles which should not feel uncomfortable.(It is important that you do not remove your hands/feet during treatment) After 10-15 minutes the current is gradually reduced and the nurse will switch the machine off and tell you when it is safe to remove your hands/feet.

The process is then repeated with the current in reverse.

A towel is provided.

If your underarms are treated, small wet pads are used instead of the trays.

## **How should I prepare for iontophoresis?**

If you are having underarm treatment, it may be beneficial to remove hair from these areas prior to treatment. However, please do not shave your underarms for two days before treatment as this could cause irritation. You will need to wash off any antiperspirant/deodorant before your treatment. There is no preparation for hands and feet.

## **Are there any side effects to iontophoresis?**

- There may be a tingling sensation on the day of treatment.

- It may cause worsening of eczema.
- The treated area may dry out.
- Small bruises may occur if the intensity is too great.
- Moderate thickening of skin or worsening of sweating if treatment sessions are too frequent (your nurse can explain this in more detail at your first appointment).

### **What happens after I have completed the treatment?**

Most people will stop sweating by the end of the course and this sweat-free period can last from a few days up to a month. Machines can be purchased privately for use at home to keep sweating under control.

You can find out about prices and types of machines from the Hyperhidrosis Support Group (website details are on the back of this leaflet).

If you feel that the treatment has not improved your condition, we may offer you a further clinic appointment to discuss further options for alternative treatment or you may be discharged back to the care of your GP.

Please note, only one course of treatment can be provided.

If you need to ask for further information please do not hesitate in contacting Dermatology Unit secretaries on 01524 583165.

### **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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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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