

## Patient information factsheet

# Photodynamic therapy (PDT)

**Your dermatology doctor has referred you for photodynamic therapy (PDT) for your skin condition. In PDT treatment we apply a light-sensitive cream or gel to your damaged skin and then shine a light source on the area to destroy abnormal skin cells.**

### Your PDT treatment appointment

You will receive a letter about your PDT appointment through the post.

On the day of your PDT appointment we would like you to bring two 500mg paracetamol tablets with you, which you should take one hour before you have your treatment.

A specially trained nurse, working under the supervision of a dermatology doctor, will give you your PDT treatment at the dermatology department. The nurse will cleanse and mildly scrape your skin so that all the scale is removed. They will then apply a light-sensitive 'topical preparation' (in the form of a cream or gel) to the whole area and cover it with a thick dressing to protect it against light for three hours. During this time you can leave the department if you wish to.

After three hours the nurse will shine a light source on the treated area for approximately eight minutes. This will only have an effect on the area where the cream or gel has been applied. We will give you special glasses to shield your eyes from the bright light. After your treatment we will cover the area with another dressing and/or clothing that blocks out the light.

The light treatment can be quite painful, especially for areas treated on the face and scalp. Taking paracetamol beforehand and cooling with water during the procedure is usually enough to reduce the discomfort.

In some circumstances we may use natural daylight instead of the light source, as this has been shown to be just as effective and a little less painful.

You may qualify for another version of PDT called ambulant PDT (ambulight) in which the light source is fixed to your skin. This means that you can go home straight after the light-sensitive cream or gel has been applied.

If you have any questions about your appointment please contact us on telephone: **023 8054 0204**.

### After PDT treatment

- Keep the treated area dry, clean and covered for 24 to 48 hours after treatment. If a dressing isn't practical please ensure that the treated area(s) is protected by sunblock (SPF 30 or above with four or five star UVA rating) or covered with clothes, a hat or gloves.
- After 24 hours the dressing may be removed and you can wash, bathe or shower as usual. Do not rub the treated area, but gently dab it dry.
- Apply Vaseline to the treatment area twice daily (except on the morning of any further PDT treatments).

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- Don't be alarmed if the area weeps a little and a crust forms, as this is normal. Dressings can be left on longer if required. Healing takes place under the crust within 8 to 10 days without significant scarring so do not disturb it. The crust will eventually fall off naturally once the area underneath has healed.
- Always wash your hands before touching the treatment site, to prevent infection.
- If you wish to use a moisturiser after the dressing has been removed, opt for a non-perfumed, bland product that suits your skin.
- Get into good habits of appropriate sun protection after treatment and for the future. This should include protecting your skin from the sun by wearing protective clothing and using sunblock (SPF 30 or above with four or five star UVA rating) on all parts of your skin that are exposed, such as your face, neck and hands, to prevent further skin damage.

## Further PDT treatment

You may need to have a second treatment one week after your first PDT appointment, depending on the condition that is being treated. Please do not apply Vaseline on the morning of this second appointment.

In most cases your specialist doctor will review your progress after three months, and give you advice about any further treatment you may need.

## Side effects

You may experience some or all of the following side effects:

- temporary swelling and redness around the treated area, which usually settles down over a few days
- tenderness or stinging of the skin during the treatment which may continue for 24 hours afterwards (you may wish to take some painkillers that suit you)
- temporary brown colouring, like a suntan (hyperpigmentation) on the skin in the treated area, which may take some time to return to its normal colour
- (rarely) permanent whiteness of the skin in the treated area (hypopigmentation), like a flat scar

## Looking after your skin

Check your skin regularly for any changes (such as moles changing and unhealed sores), both in the treated area and elsewhere. Once you have had one skin lesion of this type you will be more at risk of developing new lesions. Tell your doctor about any concerns you may have.

## Alternative treatments

Your doctor has recommended PDT as the best treatment for your specific condition. Other treatments may also be available, depending on the type of lesion you have. Please discuss this directly with your doctor or specialist nurse.

## Useful links

[www.nhs.uk/Conditions/photodynamic-therapy-NGPDT-sonodynamic-therapy/Pages/Introduction.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/photodynamic-therapy-NGPDT-sonodynamic-therapy/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

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Seeking and acting on patient feedback is key to improving the quality of our services. The Friends and Family Test gives you the opportunity to give your view on the care or treatment you've received. You can complete the survey online by visiting <http://www.uhs.nhs.uk/PatientsAndVisitors/Patientexperienceandsatisfaction/Friends-and-Family-Test.aspx> and entering the password **rhmo** when prompted.

## Contact us

You can contact our PDT nurses on telephone: **023 8054 0204**, 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday (Thursday 8am to 2pm only).

Southampton dermatology department  
Level E, Fanshawe Wing, Royal South Hants Hospital, Southampton SO14 0YG

**If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.**