

Patient information factsheet

Photodynamic therapy (PDT)

We have given you this factsheet because your dermatology doctor has referred you for photodynamic therapy (PDT) for your skin condition. It explains what PDT is and what it involves, so you know what to expect at your appointment. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of our team.

Photodynamic therapy (PDT)

PDT is a treatment that involves applying a light-sensitive cream or gel to damaged skin and then shining a light source on the area to destroy abnormal skin cells.

Before your appointment

We will send you a letter about your PDT appointment in the post.

On the day of your PDT appointment, please bring two 500mg paracetamol tablets with you. You will need to take these tablets one hour before you have your treatment.

At your appointment

PDT will be performed in our dermatology department by a specially trained nurse, working under the supervision of a dermatology doctor.

We will cleanse and mildly scrape your skin so that all the scale is removed. We 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, we will shine a light source on the treated area for approximately eight minutes. This will only have an effect on the area that we applied cream or gel to. 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 drinking cold water during the treatment is usually enough to reduce the discomfort.

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

Please note that daylight PDT is weather-dependent. If the weather conditions on the day of treatment are not suitable, we may have to re-book your appointment or revert to conventional PDT.

After your appointment

- 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, you can remove the dressing and wash, bathe or shower as usual. Do not rub the treated area, but gently dab it dry.
- Apply Vaseline to the treated area twice daily (except on the morning of any further PDT treatments).
- 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 needed. Healing takes place under the crust within eight to ten 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 treated area to prevent infection.
- If you wish to use a moisturiser after removing the dressing, 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. If this is the case, please do not apply Vaseline on the morning of your second appointment.

Your specialist doctor will usually 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 (this usually settles down after a few days)
- tenderness or stinging of the skin during the treatment (this may continue for 24 hours afterwards so you may wish to take some painkillers that suit you)
- temporary brown colouring, like a suntan (hyperpigmentation) on the skin in the treated area (this 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.

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Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

PDT nurses

Telephone: **023 8054 0204** (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, 8am to 5pm,
and Thursday, 8am to 2pm)

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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. For more information about the Friends and Family Test, please visit: www.uhs.nhs.uk/for-patients/patient-experience-and-satisfaction/friends-and-family-test

Useful links

www.nhs.uk/conditions/photodynamic-therapy

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport