

Patient information factsheet

Psoralen hand and foot soak at home before PUVA treatment

We have given you this factsheet because your dermatology (skin) doctor has referred you for a course of psoralen ultraviolet light A (PUVA) treatment for your skin condition. One part of this treatment is soaking the affected area (hands or feet) in a mixture of water and a liquid medication called psoralen. This factsheet explains how to do this at home. We hope it will answer any questions you may have. If you have any further questions, please speak to a member of the team using the contact details at the end of the factsheet.

Before PUVA treatment

Before each of your PUVA treatments at the Southampton dermatology centre, you will need to soak your hands and/or feet in a mixture of water and a medication called psoralen. You can have this done at the dermatology centre, or you can do this at home before you come to the dermatology centre.

Psoralen solution makes your skin sensitive to sunlight and artificial UVA sources. The solution is absorbed into your skin while you soak. The water temperature should be similar each time you soak, so the same amount of psoralen is absorbed into your skin. The amount of psoralen absorbed will affect how well your skin will respond to the UVA treatment.

If you are soaking your hands and/or feet at home, the nurse will give you a syringe of liquid psoralen. You will also need:

- a washing up bowl big enough to contain either your hands or feet and four litres of water, with enough space to keep the water gently moving around while you soak (if you need to soak your hands and feet, you will need two washing up bowls)
- a measuring jug
- a sink
- a towel

How to do your psoralen hand and foot soak at home

1. Fill the bowl with four litres of hot (not scalding) tap water. If you are soaking both your hands and feet, you will need to use two separate bowls (one for your hands and one for your feet).
2. Gently squeeze all the contents of the psoralen syringe into the water. You should use 1.3 millilitres (mls) for hands and 1.3mls for feet.
3. Place your hands and/or feet in the bowl(s) and let them soak for 15 minutes, keeping the water swirled around them. It will feel like ordinary warm water on your skin.
4. After 15 minutes of soaking, remove your hands and/or feet from the bowl/s and pat them dry.
5. Cover your hands with thick, dark gloves and/or your feet with thick, dark socks and shoes.
6. Pour the water down the sink and dispose of the syringe in the bin.

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If you can, please arrive at the Southampton dermatology centre within 30 minutes of soaking to receive your PUVA treatment. If your usual travel time is between 30 and 60 minutes, this is acceptable, but the time between soaking and arrival at the centre should remain consistent for each treatment to maintain similar levels of sensitivity to UVA light. In exceptional circumstances, treatment can be given up to two hours after soaking, but you must discuss this with your nurse first.

Contact us

You can contact our PUVA nurses if you have any queries or concerns.

PUVA nurses

Telephone: **023 8120 2870** (Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 8.15am to 12.30pm and 1.30pm to 5.45pm)

Email: dermatologynurseled@uhs.nhs.uk

Southampton dermatology centre

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

Telephone: **023 8120 2871** (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm, Thursday 8am to 2pm)

Useful links

www.bad.org.uk

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