

## Patient information factsheet

# Ultraviolet light B (UVB) treatment

**Your dermatology doctor has referred you for a course of ultraviolet light B (UVB) treatment for your skin condition. We hope this factsheet will help answer some of the questions you may have.**

Ultraviolet (UV) rays are produced by the sun and are grouped into different wavelengths. UVB is one of the wavelengths that have been found to be useful in treating certain skin conditions.

In the Southampton dermatology centre we use two different types of UVB treatment: broadband UVB and narrowband UVB. Your doctor will decide which type of UVB treatment you will receive, depending on your skin condition.

### How often will I need to have UVB treatment?

You will need to attend a UVB treatment session every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for up to ten weeks. The maximum number of treatments per course, except for vitiligo and atopic eczema patients, is 30, unless your doctors advise otherwise. You must make sure you can commit to the whole course of treatment before you start.

### What will happen during my course of UVB treatment?

- Before starting your treatment, you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you agree to have the treatment and you understand what it involves.
- We will need to test your skin's reaction to light before you start the course. We will test this on a Tuesday and ask you to come back at the same time the following day (Wednesday), so that we can assess the area tested. This will allow us to calculate your starting dose of treatment.
- A specially trained nurse, working under the supervision of dermatology doctors, will give you your UVB treatment. At every treatment session the nurse will ask you some questions and may examine your skin. You will then be asked to undress, remove any jewellery and stand in a special cabinet containing fluorescent tubes that produce artificial UVB light.
- Male patients must cover their genitals with a snug fitting, close weave, dark coloured sock, thong or underwear. It is very important that the exact same area of skin is covered during each exposure to UVB and that it is never removed during treatment, in order to avoid sunburn and the potential risk of skin cancer in this area.
- You must wear protective eye goggles when having UVB treatment to prevent damaging your eyes. You may also be asked to wear a protective face visor.
- We will give you specific instructions on how to position yourself in the cabinet. The correct dose will be calculated and the UVB light in the cabinet will be turned on. The length of your treatment in the cabinet will depend on many factors such as your skin type (fair or dark) and skin condition. We will increase the dose of UVB slightly with each treatment.

## What are the potential side effects of UVB treatment?

- **Redness, burning and blistering of the skin:** As with any form of sunlight, UVB may cause your skin to become red, burnt and (rarely) blistered. We try to avoid this, but some tanning and redness of your skin is likely. Please let the nurses know if your skin becomes red, burnt or blistered after UVB treatment. This usually develops eight to 14 hours after your treatment.
- **Dry skin and itching:** UVB tends to cause dry skin and sometimes mild itching. It is important to apply moisturisers regularly after you have UVB treatment to reduce this. Please let the nurses know if you experience an itchy rash while having UVB treatment.
- **Skin cancer:** Just as sun exposure may increase your risk of skin cancer, the use of UVB may increase your risk of developing skin cancer. The risk increases with the number of UVB treatments, so we will give you as few treatments as possible.
- **Premature skin ageing:** Repeated use of UVB may age your skin. This is another reason for keeping the number of UVB treatments as low as possible.
- **Rashes:** Please be aware that your skin condition could temporarily worsen during treatment. Very occasionally patients develop an itchy, bumpy rash during the course of treatment known as polymorphic light eruption. If this happens we may alter your treatment to allow this to settle.

## During your course of UVB treatment:

- **do** keep your skin covered and use a high factor sunscreen on exposed skin (such as face and hands) in sunny weather.
- **do** let the nurses know if you start using any new medications or creams.
- **do** let the nurses know if you experience any redness, burning, blistering or itching of the skin.
- **do not** sunbathe or use a sun bed.
- **do not** apply perfumes, deodorants, aftershave lotions, other cosmetic products, creams or ointments to your skin within a few hours before your treatment. These can be applied after you have had your UVB treatment.
- **do not** attend UVB treatment while under the influence of alcohol (or recreational drugs).
- **do not** have your hair cut at any point during your treatment course. This is to prevent burning of areas which were previously covered by hair, such as your neck, forehead or ears.
- **do not** take ibuprofen or naproxen if you require pain relief as this may cause your skin to burn.

## How do I book appointments for UVB treatment?

There is usually a waiting list for UVB treatment. When it is your turn, a nurse will contact you by telephone or letter to book your individual appointment times.

UVB appointments are made with the nurse on a week-by-week basis and can be booked from 7.15 to 11.45am and 1 to 4.30pm (subject to availability).

We will do our best to offer you a convenient appointment time, which you will be asked to keep for all your appointments if possible. You must contact us if you wish to change or cancel an appointment. To make sure your treatment is successful you must attend all your appointments. Please let us know if you cannot attend for any reason. If you regularly miss appointments or take breaks without agreeing them in advance, your treatment may not be successful and you may be discharged. That's why we ask that you make every effort to ensure you can attend the full course of treatment before you start.

## Appointments for children

Appointments from 4pm onwards will be given to children only.

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## Alternative treatments

Your doctor has recommended UVB treatment for you. However, there may be other treatment options available, such as psoralen ultra violet light A (PUVA) treatment, tablets or injections. There are also creams and ointments that can be used alone or during your course of UVB treatment. Please ask your doctor if you would like more information.

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 UVB nurses by telephone on **023 8054 0203** on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 7.15 to 11.45am and 1 to 4.30pm.

Southampton dermatology centre

Level E, Fanshawe Wing, Royal South Hants Hospital, Southampton.

Tel: **023 8054 0204**, opening hours: 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday (Thursday 8am to 2pm only).

## Useful links

[www.bad.org.uk](http://www.bad.org.uk)

**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.**