

Patient information factsheet

Ultraviolet light B (UVB) treatment

We have given you this factsheet because your dermatology (skin) doctor has referred you for a course of ultraviolet light B (UVB) treatment. It explains what UVB treatment is, how to prepare for it and the risks and benefits of the treatment. We hope it will answer any questions you may have. If you have any further questions, please talk to a member of the team using the contact details at the end of the factsheet.

What is UVB?

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 narrowband UVB.

How often will I need to have UVB treatment?

You will need UVB treatment sessions every Monday, Wednesday and Friday for up to ten weeks, unless your doctor tells you otherwise. You must make sure you can commit to the whole course of treatment before you start.

Before UVB treatment

Before starting your treatment, we will ask you to sign a consent form. This means 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 or Thursday and ask you to come back at the same time the following day, so that we can assess the area tested. This will allow us to calculate your starting dose of treatment.

During your course of UVB treatment

During the whole course of your UVB treatment, **you should:**

- keep your skin covered and use a high factor sunscreen on exposed skin (such as face and hands) in sunny weather or when you are exposed to sunlight through window glass
- let the specialist nurses know if you start using any new medications or creams
- let the specialist nurses know if you experience any skin
 - redness
 - burning
 - blistering
 - itching

You should not:

- sunbathe or use a sun bed
- 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 each UVB treatment)
- attend UVB treatment while under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs
- have a haircut during the whole course of your treatment if you are having your whole body treated (this will prevent burning of areas which were previously covered by hair, such as your neck, forehead or ears)
- take ibuprofen or naproxen (this may cause your skin to burn)

During each UVB treatment

You must wear protective eye goggles when having UVB treatment. This will prevent damage to your eyes. We may also ask you to wear a protective face visor.

A specially trained nurse will give you your UVB treatment in the Southampton dermatology centre. They will ask you some questions and may examine your skin each time you come to the centre for treatment

We will then ask you to undress, remove any jewellery and stand in a special cabinet containing fluorescent tubes that produce artificial UVB light.

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.

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. It is also important that the covering is not removed during treatment. Removing the covering may lead to sunburn and the potential risk of skin cancer in this area.

What are the potential side effects of UVB treatment?

Some side effects of UVB treatments can be found below.

Redness, burning and blistering of the skin

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 your UVB treatment. This can develop within several hours to a few days after your treatment.

Dry skin, itching and discomfort

UVB can cause dry and sometimes itchy skin, so it is important to apply moisturisers regularly after you have UVB treatment. Some people experience a burning discomfort that persists after their UVB treatment. Please let the nurse know if you experience itching or discomfort during your course of UVB treatment.

Premature skin ageing

Repeated use of UVB may age your skin, so we try to keep the number of UVB treatments as low as possible.

Rashes

Your skin condition could worsen during treatment. Very occasionally patients develop an itchy, bumpy rash during treatment (known as polymorphic light eruption). If this happens, we may change your treatment to allow this to settle.

Cold sores

You may be at risk of developing cold sores during UVB whole body treatment if you are already prone to these. You should wear lip salve/balm with sun protection to protect your lips.

Skin cancer

UVB therapy may increase your risk of developing skin cancer. This risk increases with the number of UVB treatments, so we will give you as few treatments as possible.

How do I book appointments for UVB treatment?

There is usually a waiting list for UVB treatment. When it is your turn, the booking team will contact you by telephone or letter to book your individual appointment times. These can be booked from 7.15am to 11.45am and 1pm to 4.45pm, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, (subject to availability).

We will try to offer you a convenient appointment time, which you will be asked to keep for all your appointments, if possible. UVB appointments are confirmed with the specialist nurse on a week-by-week basis.

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 treatments or take breaks without agreeing them in advance, your treatment may not be successful and you may be discharged.

Appointments for children

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

Alternative treatments

Your doctor has recommended UVB treatment for you. However, there may be other treatment options available, such as:

- psoralen ultraviolet light A (PUVA) treatment
- tablets
- 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.

Contact us

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

UVB nurses

Telephone: **023 8120 2870** (Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 7.15am to 11.45am and 1pm to 4.30pm)

Email: DermPPC@uhs.nhs.uk

Patient information factsheet

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