

# Having narrowband UVB phototherapy to treat your skin condition

Dermatology Department

Information for Patients

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## What is phototherapy?

Phototherapy means to treat medical conditions with light. Ultraviolet A (UVA) and B (UVB) wavelengths are part of the spectrum of natural sunlight. They have been shown to be very effective in treating some skin conditions. We can reproduce these wavelengths of light using specially coated fluorescent tubes within our UV light cabinet. The type of phototherapy used depends on the skin condition that you have and how it responded to any previous treatments.

## What is narrowband UVB phototherapy?

This uses a narrow wavelength of UV light, sometimes called TLO1, to treat your skin.

## How does it work?

UV light reduces inflammation in the skin which can help in various skin disorders.

## What conditions can narrowband UVB be used for?

Narrowband UVB phototherapy can be used in a wide range of inflammatory skin conditions such as psoriasis, eczema, vitiligo, polymorphic light eruption, generalised itching, cutaneous T cell lymphoma and other less common conditions.

## Will it work for me?

Most people will see an improvement in their skin condition, but it does not work for everyone. The improvement may last weeks, months or sometimes years after you stop treatment.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

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## You should not have narrowband UVB phototherapy if:

- you are unable to attend regularly for treatment.
- you are unable to stand unaided for up to 10 minutes.
- your skin condition is made worse by natural sunlight.
- you have had skin cancer, unless told by your consultant
- you are taking any medications which make you more sensitive to sunlight or suppress the immune system, unless told by your consultant.

## Your first visit

On your first visit you will be shown the phototherapy room by the nurse.

We will ask you some questions and explain what is involved in the treatment. We will also answer any questions you may have.

Please bring a list of your current medications, creams and ointments.

We will then assess your skin so that we can monitor your response to the treatment.

Depending on your skin condition and skin type, you may need to have a light test called an 'MED' (minimal erythema dose). This involves applying 5 different strengths of light to a small area of skin to help us choose the best starting dose. It will only take a few moments and may feel hot, but will not be painful. You will need to come back 16 to 24 hours later so we can check the test area. This check will only take about 10 minutes. We will then decide your starting dose of UVB light.

You will be given treatment days and times at this visit. They are usually twice per week at the same time.

The nurse may take photographs of your skin, please tell them if you do not want photographs taking. These photographs are used to keep track of your skin condition so we can see any changes.

Space is limited in the treatment area. Please do not bring anyone else with you to your appointment unless it is essential. Please do not bring your children with you to your appointment.

Children having treatment must have a parent or carer with them.

Please arrive on time and allow plenty of time for parking. Clinics can be busy and you may not be offered treatment if you are late.

## On the day of treatment

Your treatment will be 2 or 3 times per week. Most people have between 15 and 30 treatments depending on your response to treatment and underlying skin condition.

It is important that you come for treatment at the time given to you at your first visit. It is very important that you attend your appointments regularly. Missed appointments reduce the effectiveness of treatment and can increase your risk of sunburn.

The first few treatments will usually be very quick, often less than a minute. The length of time will get longer at each visit.

## What to bring with you

Please bring any clothing you want to wear during treatment. For example, a long sleeved top if only your legs are being treated.

You will be given a pair of protective goggles to wear during treatment. Please bring them with you to every appointment.

If your face is not affected and does not need treatment, we will give you a visor that must be worn. This visor stays at the clinic.

Males must protect the genital area which is more sensitive to UV light than the surrounding skin by wearing dark coloured underwear. You must wear the same pair of underwear every time, they should be double thickness Y-fronts. If the hips, buttocks or groin need treatment a clean dark double thickness sock can be worn to cover the genitals.

Females do not need to wear protection to the genitals. If the hips, buttocks or groin are not affected you can wear pants. You must wear the same pair of pants every time, they cannot be lace.

If you do not bring your protective wear (for example a sock) you cannot have treatment. If you forget your goggles please tell the nurse and they will give you a new pair. You cannot have treatment without goggles on.

You need to remove all jewellery unless it is something you never take off, for example a wedding ring. It is important to make sure that the same areas are covered and that you stand in the same position for every treatment to avoid burning.

## Before and after treatment

- **Do not apply any creams, moisturizer, sprays or cosmetics 2 hours before treatment.**
- You can use your usual moisturiser up to 2 hours before your treatment.
- **You should not** apply other creams or ointments such as steroid creams, Protopic (tacrolimus) ointment or Dovonex/Dovobet preparations to areas that will be treated with UV light on the day of your treatment. If you are unsure, ask your phototherapy nurse.
- Avoid perfumed products such as body sprays, aftershave, perfumes or deodorant directly before treatment. **Do not** wear makeup to your treatment.
- Do not drink alcohol before treatment.
- Avoid large amounts of foods such as celery, carrots, figs, citrus fruits, parsnips and parsley. These can make you more sensitive to ultraviolet light.
- **Always moisturise after your treatment to prevent dryness and itching.**
- You can use all of your normal skin care products after treatment.
- Avoid additional sun exposure as this may cause burning. Wear a high factor sunscreen and cover up with a hat and long sleeves if outside in the sunshine. If you get sunburned from outside you cannot be treated until it goes away.
- You must not use sunbeds whilst you are having treatment.

- Please tell the nurse if you have started any new medications, that you take regularly, during your treatment. Some medications can make your skin more sensitive to the light.
- Avoid getting your hair cut short during the course of treatment as this can lead to burning of previously covered skin.
- Avoid going to a sauna during your treatment as it can cause skin dryness.

## Possible side effects

You must report any reactions you have to staff so that the dose can be adjusted if needed.

### Short term side effects

- Redness and discomfort, similar to mild sunburn.
- Itchy or dry skin. If you get this, apply more moisturiser.
- Prickly heat rash (polymorphic light eruption or PLE).
- Coldsore. If you usually get coldsores, this may be worse during UV light treatment. Applying a high factor sun cream to your lips or wearing a visor can help to prevent this.
- Inflammation of the hair roots (folliculitis).
- Blisters in treatment areas. Please contact the department if you get blisters within 24 hours of your treatment and we will arrange for you to see a doctor.
- Some patients skin condition can get worse.

### Possible long term risks

- Skin cancer - as with natural sunlight, prolonged and repeated courses of UV light can lead to a higher risk of skin cancer. There are no limits to the number of treatments you can have over a lifetime but having more than 500 narrowband UVB treatments means that you will need yearly skin checks to look for skin cancer. The nurse will keep a record of the amount of treatments you have had.
- Long term UV light treatment may also cause premature aging of the skin, freckling and wrinkling.

## Narrowband UVB phototherapy is safe during pregnancy

### Discharge information

- You may be discharged after 18 to 24 treatments when your skin is clear or if there is no change to your skin. We do not continue treatment if there is no improvement. We do not continue treatment if your skin has cleared.
- After discharge you should continue to use your moisturisers daily even if your skin looks and feels better.

- If your skin condition comes back after you are discharged you can use your prescription creams to treat these areas.
- After discharge you can 'top up' your skin with natural light. You can expose your skin to the sun in short periods to help your skin condition. Please avoid burning in the sun. We do not advise using sun beds.
- If your skin condition comes back in the future you can have UVB phototherapy again. Please speak to your GP or dermatology doctor who can refer you for another course of phototherapy if your last course worked well. We usually limit phototherapy courses to once per year.

## What if I have any questions?

The phototherapy staff are always happy to answer any questions that you may have, either at your first assessment or at any time during your course of treatment.

Contact numbers and opening hours:

- **St Peters Health Centre:** 0116 258 5221 (Phototherapy Unit)  
Monday to Friday - 8am to 5pm
- **Loughborough Hospital:** 01509 564376 (Phototherapy Room)  
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday - 8am to 5pm
- **Melton Hospital:** 01664 800118 (Phototherapy Room) or 01664 800127 (Nursing Office)  
Tuesday and Friday - 7.30am to 11am
- **Hinckley Hospital:** 01455 441562  
Tuesday and Thursday - 8.15am to 5pm

## What if I cannot attend my appointment?

Missing your appointments will mean your treatment will not work as well. It is very important that you attend regularly. If you think that you may have a problem with attending appointments then please talk to the nursing team and they will try to help you with this. If you have any holidays booked please tell the nurses.

If you are unable to attend for any reason please let the nurse know as soon as possible using the contact numbers above. If there is no answer, leave a message with your name, date of birth, contact details and hospital number if you know it.

**If you do not attend 2 appointments without letting us know, you will be discharged from the Phototherapy Department.**

## Where can I get more information?

You can view information on the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) website:

<http://www.bad.org.uk/pils/phototherapy-nb-uvb/>

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