

Having conventional photodynamic therapy to treat your skin condition

Department of Dermatology

Information for Patients

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What is this treatment?

This treatment targets and destroys abnormal or damaged cells. This is done by applying a photosensitising gel to the treatment area. This gel works when exposed to light and destroys the damaged cell. This is called conventional photodynamic therapy.

The gel only targets abnormal or damaged cells. The surrounding healthy cells will not be harmed. It can take multiple tries for the treatment to be effective.

What can conventional photodynamic therapy be used for?

Conventional photodynamic therapy can be used to treat skin conditions like:

- Superficial basal cell carcinomas (a type of skin cancer)
- Bowen disease (squamous cell carcinoma in situ, a type of skin cancer)
- Actinic keratosis (pre cancerous skin cells)

Conventional photodynamic therapy is licenced for the conditions above.

Your doctor may want you to have this treatment for a different condition. This would make the treatment off-license. Off-license means to use a treatment in a different way that has not been approved by the manufacturer. This is common in dermatology.

If this happens, your doctor will explain how this is best for you. This will be approved and checked by the lead consultant for photodynamic therapy.

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

What are the possible side effects of treatment?

Common side effects of treatment:

- Redness and swelling to the treatment area.
- A build-up of scale or a scab to the treatment area.
- You may feel a stinging or burning pain to the area where the gel has been applied.

Uncommon side effects of treatment:

- The colour of the skin of the treatment area may change after treatment. It can become darker or lighter.
- The treatment area can become infected. This means it could be red, swollen and painful. This is rare. If this does happen, **you should contact your GP** or attend urgent care.

The treatment can sometimes not work as well. There is a chance your condition will come back. Your doctor may offer you a different treatment or another cycle of this treatment.

What do I need to do before my appointment?

You should apply moisturiser once a day for 2 weeks before treatment. You can use Vaseline or a urea based emollient. You should apply it to the treatment area. This softens any scales or crust on the treatment area before the treatment.

What to expect on the day of treatment

- First, a member of the team will explain the treatment and check that you understand and consent to it.
- The treatment area will be cleaned with an alcohol wipe.
- The crusts or scales on the treatment area will be gently removed.
- The photosensitizing gel will be applied in a thin layer to the treatment area and the surrounding 5 millimetres of skin. This means the treatment area and around the treatment area will be treated.
- The treatment area will then be covered by a dressing. The area must be left for 3 hours under the dressing.
- After 3 hours you will return to clinic. The nurse will then remove the dressing and any left over gel. The red light will be placed over the treatment area. You will be given glasses to protect your eyes.
- The lamp will then be turned on by the nurse. The lamp will be on for around 10 minutes.
- You may feel some tingling in the treatment area. This is common during the treatment.

- After around 10 minutes the treatment will end.
- You must avoid sun exposure to the treatment area for the next 48 hours. You can keep the area covered with a dressing or a piece of clean clothing.

Aftercare for the treatment area

You should always wash your hands before touching the treatment area to stop infection.

For the first 48 hours

- You must protect the treatment area from the sun. You can do this with sunscreen (at least SPF30) or by wearing protective clothing.
- You may have some swelling, redness, tenderness or stinging around the treatment area for a few days after treatment. This should reduce after a few days. You can take pain relief that suits you, for example paracetamol.

After 48 hours

- You can wash the treatment area as normal. Do not rub the area whilst washing or drying. You should gently dab the area when washing and drying.
- You can use mild cleansers and non-perfumed moisturisers for the treatment area. We recommend using a new pot of petroleum jelly or Vaseline, and a clean pump of cleanser. This prevents cross contamination and infection.
- A scab or crust may form on the treatment area. This is normal. Healing happens under the scab or crust so do not disturb or remove it. The scab will fall off naturally when the treated area underneath has healed. This can take up to 10 days.

After treatment

You should regularly protect yourself from the sun after treatment and long term. You can do this by:

- avoiding the sun,
- wearing protective clothing from the sun
- using sunscreen to exposed skin in hot weather (SPF30 plus). This is to stop the skin from getting more sun damage.

You may have a follow up appointment 3 months after treatment with the doctor or the nurse. This is to see if the treatment has worked and to see if you need more.

If you do need another cycle of treatment, this has to be 3 months after your first treatment.

More information

You can read additional information from the British Association of Dermatology and DermNet which are trusted websites:

<https://cdn.bad.org.uk/uploads/2021/12/09140231/Photodynamic-therapy-PIL-January-2023.pdf>

<http://dermnetnz.org/procedures/photodynamic-therapy.html>

Contact details

St Peter's Health Centre 0116 258 5221

Loughborough Hospital 01509 564 376

Melton Mowbray Hospital 01664 800 106

Hinckley District Hospital 01455 441 918

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل

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