

Patient information

PUVA

Dermatology Department

You have been advised to have PUVA treatment for your skin condition. There may be alternative treatments available. Please ask a doctor or nurse to discuss these with you.

What is PUVA?

PUVA is a treatment for various inflammatory skin diseases. It involves taking Psoralen tablets to make your skin sensitive to the effects of Ultraviolet-A (UVA) light. (Psoralen is a natural plant extract).

Two hours later you will stand in a UVA cabinet to receive the light treatment.

You will have a safety test called an MPD (see leaflet PIF 631) before starting PUVA.

Treatment takes place twice weekly as an outpatient and will last for about eight to twelve weeks.

What are the benefits of PUVA?

The aim of PUVA is to improve your skin condition.

What are the risks and side effects of having PUVA?

Acute

- Psoralen tablets can cause sickness and vomiting - if this happens there are alternatives.
- Itching and skin pinkness are common.
- Burning, soreness and blistering.
- Freckles or tanning.
- Cold sores (if a sufferer).

Chronic

- Skin ageing with wrinkling.
- Skin cancer can become more common if given in excess of 200 PUVA treatments in a lifetime.

The chance of you developing any of the side effects will depend on your skin type. We try to reduce the risk of side effects by carrying out a thorough assessment before starting your treatment. Your skin will be closely monitored throughout your treatment.

Are there any alternatives available?

PUVA is usually offered as your skin is not responding to creams or has failed to respond to other treatments such as Ultraviolet light B (TL01).

What will happen if I decide not to have treatment?

You can continue with your creams but your skin may worsen and you may require tablet therapy or admission to hospital in severe cases.

If PUVA is tolerated, treatment times will increase during the course so you will spend more time in the UVA cabinet.

Goggles must be worn in the UVA cabinet to protect your eyes and male patients should shield their genitalia with a dark coloured sock as light treatment may increase the risk of skin cancer in this area. If your face is not being treated we advise that you wear a visor for facial protection.

Eye protection during PUVA

Protective glasses should be worn during PUVA and you must wear them from the time you take the Psoralen tablets until you go to bed on the two days each week you have PUVA. The eyes are made more sensitive to the effects of light by the tablets.

Advice during PUVA

Do:

- Inform nurses of new medications.
- Take Psoralen tablets with a light meal (avoid fatty food as it reduces absorption of psoralen) two hours before UVA.
- Come regularly and tell us if you have a problem attending e.g. holidays.
- Avoid changes in hairstyle.

Do not:

- Sunbathe or use sunbeds.
- Become pregnant during PUVA. This is because psoralen has not been tested on pregnant women, therefore risks are not known.
- Wear cosmetics/perfumes during PUVA.
- Eat foods that contain natural psoralens (celery, parsnips, figs, carrots or limes) on the day you are having treatment as these may increase your sensitivity to the light treatment.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further information

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