

Additional Notes

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Oral Psoralen Tablets and Ultraviolet Light A Phototherapy

Phototherapy Clinic
Dermatology Resource Unit
Information and advice when receiving
Full Body PUVA Phototherapy
Outpatient Appointments:
Mon. - Fri. 9:00 am to 4:30 pm
Telephone: **0300 019 4740**
(then select option 4)

Dermatology Resource Unit, Christchurch Hospital,
Fairmile Road, Christchurch, Dorset, BH23 2JX

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Full body and PUVA phototherapy

Your doctor has requested a course of Ultraviolet Light to help treat your skin condition, at the Phototherapy Clinic, Dermatology Resource Unit, Christchurch Hospital.

We shall be treating you with Psoralen oral (medication) and ultraviolet light A.

If you have been provided with a chart entitled 'The Fitzpatrick Skin-Type Chart' we request that you complete it and then bring it with you, when you attend your first appointment with the phototherapy nurse at the Dermatology Resource Unit.

This is to help us determine the skin-type you are, which ranges from one to six, and will act as a guide for the percentage and starting dose of exposure to ultra-violet light given during your course of phototherapy.

Please read the chart and record an answer to each question asked down the left hand side of the form. Each answer equals a number. Add each number to make three separate totals, one for 'Genetic Disposition', 'Sun Exposure' and 'Tanning Habits'. Finally make a total of all three numbers. From this we will determine your score and skin type.

What are Psoralen tablets and what precautions do I need to take whilst taking them?

Psoralen tablets enable your skin to absorb ultraviolet light and are used in conjunction with UVA phototherapy. They are to be taken two hours prior to each treatment with fatty food, for example milk or buttered toast. These tablets remain effective for 24 hours. You will also need to wear protective UV glasses for up to 12 hours after the procedure (unless risk factors are identified requiring an extension of this time), to avoid the risk of cataracts we will discuss this with you. Most sunglasses are suitable and prescription glasses can be coated by your optician to also make them provide effective protection. We will need

What reasons might prevent me from having phototherapy?

If you:

- are unable to attend regularly for treatment
- are unable to stand unaided for up to 15 minutes
- have had skin cancer
- are taking a medicine which suppresses your immune system

Also, if your skin condition is made worse by natural sunlight.

What will happen if I fail to respond to the treatment?

If you fail to respond or suffer side effects you will be offered an appointment with the phototherapy nurse and possibly your dermatologist.

What if I need further treatment after completing my initial course?

During the course of your treatment you will be given a form to be signed by your GP so that if you require a further course of treatment you can self refer directly back to the unit. This letter must be returned to the Unit, once signed, in order to authorise this service.

Contact Details

Dermatology Resource Unit
Christchurch Hospital
Fairmile Road
Christchurch
BH23 2JX

Telephone number **0300 019 4740** (then select option 4).

What happens when I attend the Phototherapy Clinic for Treatment?

When you next attend, you will receive your initial treatment. The nurse will confirm with you, your name and address. Then they will programme Joules (the amount of UV energy you will be exposed to) into the cabinet and you will be asked to check and sign for this. (This is a safety procedure, which will be fully explained to you). You will then be required to undress, and stand inside a phototherapy cabinet that will emit ultra-violet (UVA) light. Each treatment will last between 1 to 30 minutes.

You will be provided with your own pair of UV protective goggles, which will be your responsibility to look after and **bring to use** during each and every subsequent appointment. We may also ask you to wear a visor. Whilst receiving treatments we advise that you close your eyes too, if safe to do so.

You may also be given instructions to cover other areas of your body, this will be clearly discussed with you. **All male patients however, are required to bring with them a black close weave sock (to protect male genitalia) on each and every visit.**

You will be required to stand on a paper towel, which you should deposit in the refuse bin after treatment. Also if used, you will need to place any visor away as directed.

What happens when I come for the rest of my appointments?

The nurse will continue to confirm with you, your name and address, assess how your treatment is progressing, programme the increased percentage of Joules into the cabinet and ask you to check and sign, prompt you as a reminder to wearing your goggles and visor and any other directions already discussed and directed.

The nurse may also request to see how your skin has been responding to the treatment, so as to enable a thorough assessment.

How can I get more psoralen medication?

You should inform the nurse, before you have used all your current supply of tablets, as more will need to be prescribed, until your phototherapy course is completed. This may require being reviewed by a phototherapy nurse before more medication is provided.

What are the potential side effects of phototherapy?

The short term side effects of phototherapy include:

- Redness and discomfort (sunburn / blistering)
- Dry and itchy skin
- Rashes - a sunlight-induced rash may develop whilst receiving ultraviolet light
- Cold sores - if you are prone to these it is advisable to cover the area usually affected with sun block when having treatment
- Worsening of skin disease.
- Psoralen tablets may also cause nausea.

Potential long-term side effects of phototherapy include:

- Premature skin aging
- Skin cancer (the risk of skin cancer is related to your total lifetime exposure to ultraviolet light, and other factors such as how easily you burn in the sun; the risk is higher with repeated courses of UVB and PUVA.
- Development of cataracts in later life

Normally though, your skin will gradually go pink and you may develop a tan. If however your skin becomes red, sore or itchy apply a creamy moisturizer and inform the nurse at your next appointment. In the event that you feel your skin has burnt or you develop blisters please telephone the department, as we will need to see you as soon as possible.

Please telephone **0300 019 5285**
Monday to Friday 9am to 4:30 pm.

If this severe reaction were to develop when the department is closed, (for example over the weekend) please seek medical advice promptly and inform the department as soon as is possible thereafter.

Do I need to avoid anything else whilst having PUVA phototherapy?

- Medicines that make you more sensitive to ultraviolet light
You should inform the phototherapy staff of any new medicines prescribed or purchased, including herbal preparations.
- Additional sun exposure or the use of sunbeds.
- Excessive quantities of foods such as celery, carrots, figs, citrus fruits, parsnips and parsley; these can make you more sensitive to ultraviolet light.
- Perfumed products.
- Creams, ointments and lotions other than moisturisers, unless directed by the phototherapy staff.

However, immediately after treatment, we encourage you to moisturise your skin with an emollient. You can obtain your own supply of emollients from your GP. If you have been prescribed other creams, please do not apply for eight or more hours after treatment.

- Changing hairstyles or having a hair cut during the treatment period may result in burning previously covered skin. Therefore, you may wish to arrange to have this done prior to commencing treatment.

to check your glasses to make sure that they are compliant. Psoralen tablets are not to be taken if you suffer from severe liver or kidney disease or are pregnant.

How often will I need to attend and how can I book my appointments?

The course is for approximately 20 treatments with session times varying from one to 30 minutes. You will be asked to attend twice weekly, leaving two days of rest (72 hours) from treatment in between each session. For example if you were to attend on Monday, the earliest next appointment would be Thursday, of that same week. You will be informed how to book your own appointments after your initial consultation with the phototherapy nurse. Availability of appointments are subject to those patients currently receiving treatment and the opening times are clearly indicated. If you cannot attend please telephone us on: **0300 019 4740** (then select option 4). If you do not attend without phoning us we may have to terminate the treatment. Please let the nurse know about any holidays or periods of time away that will not allow you to attend your course of treatment.

What happens when I attend the Phototherapy Clinic on my First Appointment?

Your first visit will be a consultation appointment only, with the Phototherapy nurse, when your affected areas of skin and skin type will be assessed, and arrangements for you to receive your psoralen medication will be made.

You will be informed about the risks and benefits of your treatment, how it will be administered, with the appropriate level of exposure and course of treatment planned. You will be asked to sign a consent form, whilst other associated paperwork will also be completed.