

Additional Notes

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Psoralen and Ultraviolet Light A hand and/or foot Phototherapy

Phototherapy Clinic
Dermatology Resource Unit
Information and advice when receiving
hand and/or foot 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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Hand and/or foot phototherapy with PUVA

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 (in a topical gel or lotion) and Ultraviolet Light A.

What is the Fitzpatrick skin type chart and how do I complete it?

If you have been provided with a chart entitled 'The Fitzpatrick skin type chart' we request that you complete it and then bring with you, prior to attending 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 have a bearing on the percentage and starting dose of exposure to ultra-violet light during your course of phototherapy.

Provide 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 grand total of these three numbers. From this we will determine your score and skin type.

What is Psoralen gel or bath lotion?

Psoralen is a drug which has been shown to be effective in treatment of some skin disorders when combined with exposure to Ultra Violet A rays. In a gel or bath lotion form it can enable treatment of localized areas of the body such as hands or feet, minimising exposure to the rest of the body.

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: **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. Ensure that you only use moisturisers to the affected areas and no other topical medicaments on the day of your treatment.

You will be required to attend 20 minutes prior to your booked appointments, in order to allow 15 minutes for the gel or bath lotion soak to be applied thereby preparing your skin for 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 machine 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 place your hands and/or feet into a small cabinet that will emit ultra-violet (UVA) light.

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. Whilst receiving treatments we advise that you close your eyes too, if safe to do so.

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 cabinets and ask you to check and sign, prompt you as a reminder to wearing your goggles 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 gel, 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 / blisters)
- dry and itchy skin
- rashes - a sunlight-induced rash called polymorphic light eruption may develop whilst receiving ultraviolet light
- worsening of skin disease.

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.

Normally though, your skin will gradually go pink and you may develop a localised tan. If however your skin becomes red, sore or itchy apply a creamy moisturiser 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 4:30pm.

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.
- 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.

What reasons might prevent me from having phototherapy?

If you:

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

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

Both psoralen gel and lotion require - application to or immersion of - the area to be treated for 15 minutes prior to ultraviolet light exposure. Following treatment, the area must be washed before leaving the department. You must also keep treated areas, out of the sun, for the next 24 hours.

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

The course is for approximately 20 treatments. 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.

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. Your affected areas of skin and skin type will be assessed. 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.