

PUVA Treatment Information for patients

**Medical Directorate
Department of Dermatology**



Options available

If you'd like a large print, audio, Braille or a translated version of this leaflet then please call:

01253 955588

Our Four Values:

People Centred

Positive

Compassion

Excellence

PUVA therapy is a very effective treatment used for numerous skin conditions including eczema and psoriasis. It involves taking a medication called Psoralen (P) either by mouth as a tablet, applied to the skin as a lotion, or by soaking in the solution in water. The skin is then exposed to special wavelengths of light called UVA (PUVA). The Psoralen makes the skin more sensitive to the light rays.

PUVA therapy must be carried out in hospital under medical supervision; it will be necessary for you to attend twice weekly during the course of treatment. The length of the course of treatment will vary from one patient to another but an average for the treatment would be between six to ten weeks.

Light exposure takes place in a specially designed cubicle containing fluorescent tubes around the walls of the cabinet, unless you need treatment only of areas such as the hands and feet from a small portable unit.

PUVA WITH TABLETS

Psoralen **TABLETS** make both the skin and eyes sensitive to light for some hours. It is therefore most important that you wear the protective goggles and visor, which are provided, during each treatment. Protective UV 400 sunglasses **MUST** be worn for 12 hours after you take your tablets when outdoors, or indoors if near fluorescent lamps.

Throughout the course of treatment you must not sunbathe or use a sunbed at any time. On the days of treatment you should avoid unnecessary exposure of the skin to direct sunlight (even through windowglass).

Topical PUVA

This is used to treat small areas of skin, for example, the hands and feet. A lotion is applied to the affected areas or you may be asked to soak in bowls of water with the solution added for 20 minutes before UVA treatment. Protective glasses are not required to be worn if you are receiving topical PUVA. Towels will be provided.

Bath PUVA

The doctor may decide to give you Bath PUVA. This involves soaking in a bath for 20 minutes in a water solution of Psoralen prior to UVA light. Towels and gowns will be provided on each attendance.

General Information

You should inform the supervising doctor about any other medication being taken for other reasons.

You should avoid putting cosmetics, perfumed substances or aftershave lotion on your skin before UVA treatment, as these may make your skin more sensitive to the ultraviolet light.

You should avoid planning pregnancy during your PUVA treatment. While no problems have been reported, it is a good rule to avoid PUVA when you are pregnant. However, if pregnancy does occur, you should tell the supervising Doctor.

Occasional side-effects are possible and these include:-

- A sunburn-like reaction (particularly in patients with a fair complexion).
- Very rarely a prickling sensation of the skin, occasionally bad enough to necessitate stopping treatment.
- Queasiness after taking the Psoralen tablets (which can be improved by changing the psoralen dose).
- Skin dryness (this can easily be helped with moisturising creams).
- Premature ageing changes in the skin (e.g. dryness, freckling and wrinkling) may occur in patients who have had multiple courses of PUVA therapy for many years and such they may have a slightly increased risk of developing skin cancer in later life. Your doctor will have assessed your skin type already and discussed this as part of your consent process. Safe lifetime doses are monitored in the department.
- The importance of wearing protective UV spectacles for the rest of the day after taking the tablets cannot be underestimated as there is a risk of cataract damage to the lens in the eyes is possible.

PRACTICAL POINTS

Please take the prescribed number of tablets 2 hours before attending the Unit for treatment. These should NOT be taken on an empty stomach, but with a small amount of food.

Protective UV 400 sunglasses must be worn for 12 hours after you have taken your tablets if outdoors or inside near any fluorescent lighting.

Throughout the course of your treatment, you should not sunbathe or use a sun bed at any time. It is important that clothing is not worn whilst undergoing treatment in the light cubicle (except male patients, who will need to wear a protective covering to the genital area).

If you should develop excessive discomfort or redness of the skin following treatment, please contact the nursing staff.

For treatment to be effective, it is important to attend the hospital regularly. If you are unable to attend for treatment, yourself or a relative should telephone the nursing staff, giving an acceptable reason for cancelling. If you fail to attend for more than three/four treatments without telephoning, then your treatment time will be given to another patient.



Useful contact details

Contact numbers:

Clifton Hospital
01253 957079
Fleetwood
Hospital 01253
956053

Hospital Switchboard: **01253 300000**

Patient Relations Department

The Patient Relations Department offer impartial advice and deal with any concerns or complaints the Trust receives. You can contact them via:

Tel: **01253 955589**

email: **patient.relations@bfwh.nhs.uk**

You can also write to us at:

**Patient Relations Department, Blackpool Victoria Hospital,
Whinney Heys Road, Blackpool FY3 8NR**

Further information is available on our website: **www.bfwh.nhs.uk**

References

This leaflet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this leaflet are available on request from: **Procedural Document and Leaflet Coordinator 01253 953397**

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