

Dermatology Unit (Rugby St Cross)

Topical (local) PUVA therapy

This leaflet aims to provide you with information about your treatment.

Please read this entire leaflet so that you understand what is required of you and to ensure the effectiveness and safety of the treatment.

Any additional questions that you may have can be answered by the doctor, nursing staff or pharmacist.

What is Topical (local) PUVA therapy?

Topical PUVA (Psoralen + UVA light) involves the application of a psoralen gel or solution which makes the skin more sensitive to UVA light. You will be required to expose the affected parts of your skin to a strictly monitored dose of UVA light. Treatments are usually twice a week and there is at least two days in between each treatment. Several different skin diseases can be treated effectively with PUVA.

What is UVA light?

Light is classified into many different parts or wavelengths. One part which is invisible to the human eye is known as ultraviolet light "A" (UVA). UVA light is a normal component of sunlight. Artificial light sources in the form of light tubes are available that produce UVA light.

What should you do before PUVA therapy?

Please do not use any creams, ointments, perfumed soaps or toiletries on the day before coming for a treatment. Do not use any coal tar preparations for at least 24 hours prior to PUVA. This is because some perfumes and medicines contain chemicals which increase light sensitivity and might lead to a "sunburn effect" following PUVA treatment. They may also affect the absorption of the psoralen into the skin.

Some medical conditions can be aggravated by PUVA. Before starting



Patient Information

therapy, be sure to tell the doctor or nurse if you:

- Have had a severe reaction to psoralens in the past
- Have had any radiotherapy treatment or if any is planned
- Have or have ever had a skin cancer
- Have any medical condition which requires you to stay out of the sun
- Have reason to believe you are pregnant or you are planning to get pregnant
- Are breast-feeding
- Are using any creams, ointments or are taking any medications

Psoralen Gel

1. The nurse will apply a thin smear of the psoralen gel to the area to be treated. This should dry within 30 minutes.
2. You will be given protective glasses to wear whilst receiving your treatment which should be kept securely in place throughout your treatment time.

Psoralen basin soaks

The psoralen solution will be prepared for you by the nurse.

1. The affected skin will be soaked in the solution for 15 minutes.
2. You will be given protective glasses to wear whilst receiving your treatment which should be kept securely in place throughout your treatment time.
3. You will then be asked to wait 30 minutes before your UVA treatment commences.

What special precautions should you take?

- **Do not** expose PUVA treated skin to sunlight after treatment. If you have had your hands treated for example, wear gloves whilst driving as UVA will pass through glass
- **Do not** use sun beds, solariums or sunbathe as these will add to your exposure to UVA light and you are more likely to get sun burnt. They will also interfere with your treatment schedule
- **Do** tell the doctor or nursing staff if you are prescribed **any** medicines or wish to start taking any medication during your course of PUVA therapy

Patient Information

- It is very important not to touch other areas especially your face whilst the psoralen emulsion or solution is on your hands. This would unnecessarily increase the area of the skin which will be sensitive to UVA light.
- Once the area to be treated is established, this same area should be treated every time unless otherwise directed

How long will treatment last?

It may take up to several weeks before your skin condition starts to improve. Generally PUVA courses are for about 4 months. Please remember it is **important** that you **attend regularly**.

What are the benefits of PUVA therapy?

PUVA is used to improve various skin conditions. Most people's skin responds well and you will not require any other types of treatment for several months. However the benefits of PUVA are usually only temporary and at sometime in the future you may require further treatment for your skin condition.

Are there any problems associated with pregnancy or breast-feeding whilst having PUVA therapy?

The effects of PUVA therapy on the unborn child are not known. It is essential that some method of contraception be used during a course of PUVA. If you become pregnant whilst having PUVA, please inform the doctor or nursing staff as soon as possible. It is not known whether psoralens pass into the mothers' milk, therefore it is advised that you do not breast feed during a course of PUVA.

What are the side effects?

Short term

Side effects that may occur include

- Itching
- Soreness
- Freckling of the skin.
- It is usual to experience slight reddening and/or itching of the skin for two or three days following treatment.

Patient Information

It is important to contact your doctor or the nursing staff if any side-effect is severe or bothers you at any stage. Often side-effects can be helped by products recommended by your doctor or the nursing staff.

What are the risks of PUVA therapy?

Late or long term side effects

Patients who are treated with PUVA over a number of years have an increased risk of developing skin cancers and of their skin aging quicker than normal. This is why courses are generally short and not more frequent than once a year. Patients who have been exposed to multiple courses of PUVA should look out for skin changes and report any suspicious area to their doctor or the nurse.

General points to remember

It is advisable to use a moisturiser after PUVA therapy to combat the drying effect of the treatment.

If you **miss any of your appointments**, we will assume you no longer require treatment and you will be **discharged**.

If you cannot attend or would like any further information about your treatment, please phone 01788 663249 to speak to one of the nurses.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 01788 663249 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

Document History

Department:	Dermatology
Contact:	33249
Updated:	October 2020
Review:	October 2022
Version:	5.1
Reference:	HIC/LFT/1350/11