



Phototherapy

What is phototherapy?

Phototherapy is the use of ultraviolet (UV) light to treat medical conditions. The most common forms of phototherapy used are narrowband UVB and PUVA (psoralen, a chemical that increases the effect of light on the skin, and UVA).

How does phototherapy work?

UV light reduces inflammation in the skin and can help in various skin disorders such as psoriasis, eczema, generalized itching and polymorphic light eruption.

What does phototherapy involve?

Phototherapy treatments are given in a walk-in cabinet two or three times per week. The average course lasts 20-30 treatments. The duration of each treatment starts at less than one minute and gradually increases up to ten minutes. You should allow at least 15-20 minutes for each appointment.

A visor or face shield may be worn if your face is not affected by your skin condition. Otherwise, all of your skin will be exposed to UV light except your eyes (protected by goggles) and male genitalia (covered).

If you are having PUVA (psoralen + UVA) treatment, you may need to take the psoralen as a tablet two hours prior to each treatment session or apply it directly onto your skin. You will need to wear glasses that block both UVA and UVB for 24 hours from the time the psoralen tablet is taken. Please make sure your glasses have been checked (by the nurse or your optician), as failure to do so may result in cataracts and long-term eye damage.

What are the potential side effects of phototherapy?

Potential short-term side effects include sunburn, rash, cold sores and worsening of skin disease. Potential long-term side effects include premature skin ageing and increased risk of skin cancer. Psoralen tablets may cause nausea.

What can I expect on my first appointment?

You will see the phototherapy nurse who will check your skin and give your skin a series of test doses of light, usually on your back, arms or buttocks. The nurses will assess your skin's response either one day or three days later, and then discuss starting treatment.

What should I do at every phototherapy appointment?

- Please tell the phototherapy nurses if you have started taking new medicines or are using new creams or ointments
- You may use a water-based moisturiser (creams, lotions, etc) on treatment days prior to attending your appointment

Information for Patients

What do I need to avoid whilst having phototherapy?

- Medicines (including non-prescribed preparations) that make you more sensitive to UV light- please inform the phototherapy nurses of the medicines you are taking during phototherapy
- Additional sun exposure and/or sunbed use – please use sunscreen after treatment and on non-treatment days
- Changes in hair styles or haircuts, as they may result in burning of previously unexposed skin
- Wearing watches or jewellery – they may cover different parts of the skin at different phototherapy appointments and previously unexposed skin might burn
- Using perfumes, deodorants or aftershaves just before phototherapy, as they may contain substances that sensitise the skin to UV light
- Non-attendance of phototherapy appointments – we will discharge you from phototherapy if you do not attend three consecutive appointments

Where can I get more information?

Visit the British Association of Dermatologists' website (<https://www.skinhealthinfo.org.uk/a-z-conditions-treatments/>) or scan the QR codes below:

Narrowband UVB	Oral PUVA	Topical PUVA
		

How would I provide feedback on my phototherapy treatment?

We would be grateful if you would complete our anonymous survey online as your feedback is very important to us. It can be access at <https://www.uhb.nhs.uk/forms/phototherapy-survey> or via scanning the QR code below:



How can I contact phototherapy staff?

Dermatology outpatients: 0121 371 5469

Phototherapy department: 0121 371 5465 (there is no voicemail facility)

Dermatology secretaries: dermatologysecretaries2@uhb.nhs.uk

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk