

## Patient Information – Daylight Photodynamic Therapy

### Department of Dermatology

#### Introduction

This leaflet is intended to provide you with information regarding your daylight photodynamic therapy. It is to help answer questions you or your family may have following your initial consultation and referral for treatment from a dermatology doctor or specialist nurse.

#### What is daylight photodynamic therapy?

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) with daylight is used in the treatment of precancerous skin lesions on the face and scalp known as **actinic keratoses** (AK). PDT is used when other treatments are not suitable.

Actinic keratoses are precancerous areas of skin or lesions which have been damaged by overexposure to sunlight. This causes the skin cells to grow at an abnormally fast rate. AKs generally appear on sun exposed areas, such as the face and scalp and become rough and scaly. Large areas of AK are called field areas. It is very important that these areas are treated to avoid the possibility of them progressing to skin cancer in the future.

Photodynamic therapy is a method of treating localised skin cancers or certain types of precancerous lesions. It involves the application of a photosensitising gel and the use of daylight to activate this gel. The gel starts a process in the damaged cells which helps destroy them while leaving the healthy skin intact.

#### What can I expect on the day of treatment?

**On arrival, please inform your healthcare professional if you have a peanut or soya allergy**

When you arrive at the hospital/clinic, one of the team will explain the procedure and ask for your consent to the treatment.

Your healthcare professional will apply chemical sunscreen to all daylight exposed areas including the lesion(s) to be treated to avoid the possibility of sunburn. They will leave the sunscreen to dry. Once the sunscreen has dried, they will gently remove any scales or crust from the surface of the lesion.

A thin layer of photosensitising gel will then be applied to the lesion which should not be removed. Within 30 minutes you should then go outside as directed by your healthcare professional and expose the lesion to natural daylight.

You should then stay outside for a continuous period of 2 hours. **Do not** wear a scarf, hat or cover the treatment area in any way. If you have to go indoors briefly (for example to use the toilet), make sure you return outside immediately to make sure you complete your treatment.

During treatment, it is possible that you may experience a slight burning sensation at the treatment site, but this is usually mild.

After 2 hours, you should return indoors to wash off any remaining gel. You should then cover the area with sunscreen.

Please avoid sun exposure on the treated lesion sites and surrounding skin for approximately 48 hours following treatment. You could keep the treated area covered with further sunscreen or a hat and/or scarf.

## What should I expect after the treatment?

The treatment area may become red or crusted. Skin reactions such as redness, swelling or crusting are expected as a normal part of the treatment response and demonstrates destruction of the tumour cells. The skin reactions are usually at a peak on day 2 or 3 after treatment, at which point scaling or flaking can develop. This usually resolves after 7 to 10 days.

As post treatment care, your healthcare professional may recommend that you apply a moisturiser every day and that you use at least a factor 30 sunscreen to prevent any further damage to the area treated.

## Follow-up appointment

A follow-up appointment will be requested with a dermatologist for 3 to 4 months after the treatment to reassess the treated areas, and if not completely cleared you may be advised about a second treatment of PDT, or alternative treatments as advised by your dermatologist.

## Questions and concerns

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your treatment, please call the phototherapy unit at Hertford County Hospital on **01992 823196**. The unit is open Monday to Friday, 7.30am to 5pm (excluding Bank Holidays).

If you experience a reaction to treatment outside of these hours, then please call **NHS 111** for advice.

## Contact details

Dermatology Department  
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North Road  
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Hertfordshire SG14 1LP

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| <b>Telephone:</b> Secretary to Dr Mazzon | ☎ 01992 823012 |
| Secretary to Dr Hargest                  | ☎ 01992 823012 |
| Secretary to Dr Gupta                    | ☎ 01992 823178 |
| Secretary to Dr Shahzad                  | ☎ 01992 823178 |
| Secretary to Dr Ogden                    | ☎ 01992 823092 |
| Secretary to Dr Hemmady                  | ☎ 01992 823092 |
| Dermatology nurse helpline               | ☎ 01992 823038 |
| Minor operation bookings                 | ☎ 01992 823069 |
| Outpatient appointments                  | ☎ 01438 284444 |

