



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Receiving PUVA Treatment in the Dermatology Out-patient Department

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Dermatology Clinic

The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Tel: 01904 726629

Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive,

Scarborough, YO12 6QL

Tel: 01723 342492 or 01723 368222 ext 2217

The New Selby War Memorial Hospital,

Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9BX

Tel: 01904 724296

Contents	Page
What is PUVA therapy?	3
What is involved?	4
How often do I have treatment?.....	5
What is involved in taking Psoralen?	6
What is involved in the UVA light therapy?.....	8
What are the benefits of this treatment?	8
Are there any risks with this treatment?.....	9
What are the long-term risks?.....	10
General points to remember during PUVA therapy	11
Further contacts:	13
Tell us what you think of this leaflet	14
Teaching, training and research.....	14
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS).....	14

The purpose of this leaflet is to give you information about the treatment that has been recommended for your skin condition. In this leaflet we give you the answers to the most common questions that patients ask. If you have other questions that are not covered please ask the staff in the clinic, they are there to help you.

What is PUVA therapy?

It is a treatment given twice weekly for your skin condition. Your skin will be treated with ultra-violet (UV) light at wavelength. A light band for which your skin must be made sensitive by a drug called Psoralen (P).

$$P + UV = PUVA$$

The Psoralen can be taken by tablet or in a solution mixed in a bath or basin that you soak in. Very occasionally for some patients it is used as paint or gel on the skin for hand or foot conditions.

Before you start your light treatment we will carry out an assessment of your skin. This assessment will give us an indication of the starting dose for your treatment.

What is involved?

You will be offered an appointment to attend a pre-assessment clinic. At this appointment we will discuss your treatment and assess your skin condition. If your skin condition allows, we may do a test dose of light therapy on a part of unaffected skin. There is a possibility that we may not be able to carry out this test if your skin condition is extensive. If this happens, the nurse will assess your skin to determine your skin type before commencement of your light treatment.

If we are able to do a test dose on your skin, you will return to the department three days later and the nurse will read and assess the results of your test dose. You will then be given your first light treatment in the department.

If you are having your full body treated you will stand unclothed in a cabinet with light tubes. However, you may be asked to wear cotton clothes during treatment to protect your skin that does not need treating.

You will be provided with close fitting goggles, which must be worn throughout. **Do not open your eyes during treatment.**

Men will be advised to bring a scrotal support or a sock to be worn over the genital area while having treatment.

All clothes worn during treatment should be of close thick weave fabric, and the same clothes **must** be worn during every treatment.

Avoid having a haircut during the course of treatment if you are having your body treated to avoid exposing new areas and risk burning.

How often do I have treatment?

This light therapy is usually given twice weekly (Monday & Thursday or Tuesday & Friday). It is very important that you attend all appointments to maximise the benefit of treatment. If you are unable to attend please contact the department. If you fail to attend more than three treatments without informing staff, your treatment time may be given to another patient and your treatment maybe stopped and you could be discharged.

What is involved in taking Psoralen?

By tablet

- Baseline blood samples maybe needed for some patients.
- You need to take the tablet two hours before you have light therapy.
- Take the tablet after a meal as it should not be taken on an empty stomach.
- Your eyes will need to be protected from other sources of ultra violet light for 24 hours after taking the tablet. Protection is required from sunlight through window glass, bare fluorescent tubes and halogen lamps (not those which have plastic diffusion cover or ordinary light bulbs).
- You will need to purchase a pair of sunglasses (or UV protection coated glasses) and have them tested prior to starting your treatment. The glasses must protect your eyes from the 400 spectrum of ultra violet light.

By solution in a bath or basin

- It is important to mix the Psoralen in the water to ensure it is well mixed and the water covers the whole area to be treated.
- For a bath PUVA you soak in the solution for 15 minutes before the light therapy.
- Avoid splashing your face when soaking in the bath.
- For a basin PUVA (for hands and feet) you soak in the solution for 15 minutes. If your skin problems affect your palms and soles you will also need to wait up to 30 minutes before the light therapy.
- Eye protection is not necessary with Psoralen mixed with water.

By gel

- The gel is applied to the skin and then you will wait 30 minutes before light therapy.

By paint

- The paint is applied to the skin and then you will have to wait 15 minutes before the light therapy.
- Eye protection is not necessary if you have Psoralen applied as paint.

What is involved in the UVA light therapy?

- You stand in a cabinet usually with no clothes on.
- You will be provided with close fitting goggles or a visor to protect your eyes inside the cabinet. Do not remove these during the light treatment.
- However, men may be supplied with a scrotal support but, we encourage men to bring their own if possible. The nurse will discuss this further with you at your assessment.
- If you wear clothes in the cabinet it is important to wear the same ones each time to cover up the same parts of your body. The nurse will explain this to you.
- Clothes should be of thick, close weave fabric to block out the ultra violet light properly.
- Avoid having your hair cut during a course of PUVA so newly exposed areas do not burn.

What are the benefits of this treatment?

PUVA therapy can improve many skin conditions. Patients usually start PUVA therapy when other forms of treatment have not suited them.

Are there any risks with this treatment?

- The main risk of PUVA therapy in the short term is burning the skin. We try to avoid this by increasing the light therapy slowly.
- In the long term, if you have a lot of treatments (more than 200) then you will have an increased risk of skin cancer. Your treatment and follow up examinations will take this into account.
- If you notice any early signs (for example the beginning of a small lump) tell the Dermatology clinic staff or your GP.
- Most PUVA cancers are easily treated and are cured at an early stage.
- There is a special risk of male genitalia being exposed to sunlight and so they must be covered during the light therapy.
- Some people have itchy skin after a course of PUVA. This does not usually mean anything serious.

- Occasionally some patients have to stop the PUVA therapy.
- Please report any problem with side effects before your next treatment. If you have felt sick or had any burning or tingling on your skin then please tell the staff.

What are the long-term risks?

After many years of light therapy treatments there may be an increased risk of developing skin cancer. The actual risk levels are thought to be very low for this particular form of sun light therapy, however an average course of treatment is thought to be equivalent to a two-week sunny holiday. To reduce the risks we try to keep the courses of light treatment as short as possible.

General points to remember during PUVA therapy

- Moisturising cream or ointment (emollient) may be part of your general treatment for your skin condition. Do not apply it in the four hours before PUVA treatment.
- PUVA is not recommended during pregnancy. You should avoid getting pregnant while you are having a course of PUVA.
- Perfumes can make you more sensitive to sunlight to avoid using scented products such as bath foam, perfumes and after-shave lotions in the four hours before PUVA treatment.
- Certain drugs can make your skin more sensitive to the ultra violet light so please tell the staff if you are taking new medication or tablets.

- Avoid sunbathing or using sun beds throughout the course of PUVA therapy if it is being given to the whole body. If you go out in the sun cover your skin including your arms and legs; and use sunscreen on exposed areas at least SPF30 plus and 3 or 4 star UVA protection.
- It is important that you come regularly for your treatment when you are on a course of PUVA therapy. If you fail to attend **two consecutive appointments**, without informing staff you will be discharged from treatment.

Further contacts:

If you have any questions or concerns about PUVA therapy you can phone us during the clinic opening times, which are as follows:-

York Clinic

Tel: 01904 726629

Monday to Friday 7am to 5.30pm

Scarborough Clinic

Tel: 01723 342492 or 01723 368222 ext 2217

Monday to Friday

Selby Clinic

Tel: 01904 724296

Monday to Friday 8.00am to 5.00pm

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Melanie Bruton, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Dermatology Clinic, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 726625.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email pals@york.nhs.uk.

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

如果你要求本資 不同的 或 式提供 , 電
或發電

Jeżeli niniejsze informacje potrzebne są w innym języku lub formacie, należy zadzwonić lub wysłać wiadomość e-mail

Bu bilgileri değişik bir lisanda ya da formatta istiyorsanız lütfen telefon ediniz ya da e-posta gönderiniz

Telephone: 01904 725566

Email: access@york.nhs.uk

Owner	Sister Lois Alderson, Dermatology
Date first issued	January 2001
Review Date	September 2023
Version	9 (issued September 2021)
Approved by	Dr K Thomson, Consultant Dermatologist
Document Reference	PIL 188 v9
© 2021 York and Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. All Rights reserved.	