



York and Scarborough
Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Diphencyprone (DPC) for Alopecia

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Dermatology Department

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

Tel: 01904 631313

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What is diphencyprone (DPC)?

Diphencyprone is a chemical produced by the Department of Organic Chemistry, University of Nijmegen in Holland. It does not have a licence for use as a medicine. It is a contact allergen, which means that contact with DPC should result in a mild allergic reaction.

What is it used for?

It is used for the condition of Alopecia. The aim of the treatment is to first make you sensitive to the DPC. This is so that when the solution is applied to your scalp, the reaction it causes helps to encourage hair growth.

How do I become sensitive to DPC?

A small amount of DPC is applied to your arm. The aim is to cause a reaction that is red and itchy and this can occur between 48 hours and eight days after it has been applied. You are given a follow up appointment for two weeks and the area is then checked to see what kind of reaction has occurred. If there has been no reaction, we will apply the DPC again to your other arm, cover it with a dressing and check it again after two weeks. This will continue until a reaction occurs or the highest dose is reached.

What happens next?

A small area of your scalp is painted with very weak DPC solution every week. The concentration of DPC is increased gradually until a reaction occurs, which lasts between 24 and 36 hours.

What else do I need to know?

It is a weekly treatment. You will need to keep your scalp covered for 24 hours after treatment. It may be easier to wear a cap or hat if a large area is being treated.

The doctor may ask you to have some blood tests during your treatment.

If there is no reaction to the treatment or re-growth after four months, the nurse will stop the treatment and arrange for you to see the doctor.

What are the possible side effects?

The area could become red, sore and blister. This can be controlled with the use of a topical steroid, which will be prescribed.

Lymph nodes sometimes develop in the back of the neck. These can remain throughout the treatment, disappearing after the treatment has finished.

If you have Eczema, it may worsen during treatment.

Occasionally an itchy rash called urticaria can develop for one to two days after treatment. This is usually well controlled with an antihistamine.

A rare side effect can be change of skin pigmentation. This change can be darkening of the skin called hyperpigmentation or skin lightening called hypopigmentation or even vitiligo a loss of pigment. This change can be permanent.

It is advised that other chemicals are not used at the same time as your treatment with DPC e.g. photographic solutions.

Once you have been sensitised to DPC, this is for life.

DPC is not thought to cause cancer or birth defects.

Women who are pregnant are not suitable for treatment. Women must ensure adequate contraception is used during treatment and for six months after treatment.

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:

Dermatology Department, The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 726621.

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.

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Telephone: 01904 725566

Email: access@york.nhs.uk

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