



Photodynamic therapy (PDT)

This leaflet explains what Photodynamic therapy (PDT) entails, how to prepare for it and possible side effects of treatment.

What is PDT?

Photodynamic therapy is a new and highly successful method of treating localised skin cancers or pre-cancers. The treatment consists of applying a special cream to the skin lesion and three hours later shining a pure red light on it. The pure light is a weak harmless light, and the cream is also harmless. Only where the two are combined will they treat the abnormal area of your skin.

What are the benefits of PDT?

- Healing is usually very rapid.
- The cosmetic result is very good with little or no scarring.
- This treatment does not prevent you from having other treatment options in the future.

Are there any drawbacks to PDT?

There are no long-term side effects from the treatment, but there are a few minor drawbacks.

- We need to leave the cream on for a full 3 hours. This allows the cream to sink in as deeply as possible. During this waiting period you do not have to stay in the hospital, but you must return at the prearranged time for treatment.
- There may be some discomfort during and after treatment. You may be offered an injection of local anaesthetic just before or during treatment to numb the area.
- A second treatment, if required, will be performed after one week.

What happens during treatment?

Cream application:

It is important that you arrive at your appointment time.

The nurse will remove any crust lying on top of the lesion. This allows better absorption of the cream.

The cream will be applied, and a dressing will be placed over this to exclude ordinary light.

It is important that you do not disturb or press on this dressing in case the cream spreads from the treatment area.

You will be advised when to return to the hospital for treatment.

Light application:

The dressing and remaining cream will be removed.

Pure red light from a machine will be directed onto the lesion.

If the treatment is near the eyes, you will be given glasses to wear.

There may be a tingling feeling during treatment, but discomfort varies from patient to patient.

At the end of the treatment a non-stick dressing will be applied to the treated area. You must leave this dressing in place for 48 hours (to exclude light to the area).

If required, you will be given a follow up appointment.

What do I do when I return home?

- Do not wet the area until after the dressing is removed.
- After the dressing is removed the treated area will probably crust over. This is normal and healing will take place under this crust. Do not disturb or pick this crust.
- In some cases, the treated area may appear pink, swell, or ooze slightly. This will normally settle within 24 hours.
- After the dressing is removed you can bathe or shower as usual. Do not rub the treated area, gently dab it dry.
- The complete healing process will take just a few weeks.

Please feel free to discuss any questions or worries you may have with your doctor.

Contact us

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Further information

The British Association of Dermatologists www.bad.org.uk

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

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