

Narrowband UVB therapy

This leaflet explains what Narrowband UVB therapy entails, how to prepare for it and possible side effects of treatment.

What is Narrowband UVB therapy?

Narrowband UVB is a particular form of Ultra Violet (UV) Light. It can help to improve a number of skin conditions including psoriasis, eczema, and vitiligo.

This treatment may have been recommended because other treatments (tablets and creams) might not have worked. However it is important that you keep using your medication or creams, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.

Narrowband UVB is safe both during pregnancy and whilst breastfeeding.

How long will the treatment last?

Before the treatment begins you will be asked to attend the Dermatology Outpatients Department for an assessment.

The light treatment will take place using a special cabinet in the Phototherapy Suite near to the South Block entrance at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The treatment only lasts for a short time, and is repeated two or three times a week for 6-10 weeks or until your skin condition improves:

- All day Mondays and Fridays.
- Wednesdays mornings only.

It is important that you don't miss any of the treatment sessions, so we will ask you to confirm that you can commit to being available for this period of time before beginning the course of treatment.

On the day of your treatment:

Do not wear perfume, deodorants, antiperspirants or aftershave on the day of your treatment as they may contain chemicals which make your skin more sensitive to the light and may stain your skin. They can be used after each treatment.

You must apply your regular moisturiser at least 30 minutes to two hours before treatment as this will help to absorb the light. Do not use any other treatment creams before treatment, as these could cause a reaction. The Phototherapy nurse will advise you, when you attend for your assessment.

It is important that you do not apply sunscreen or sun block before your treatment session as this will stop the treatment from working properly. Some make-up contains a Sun Protection Factor (SPF); if you are unsure please check when you come for your assessment.

Let the phototherapy nurse know of any changes to your medication, e.g. antibiotics. Also tell them about any vitamin supplements, herbal treatments, Chinese medicine and over the counter medications or creams you are using.

Please let the department know if you are unable to attend any of your treatment sessions by telephoning 0118 322 7133. There is also an answer machine where messages can be left.

If you repeatedly miss appointments you may be discharged from the course of treatment.

What happens during treatment?

Initially, treatment lasts for a few seconds and this will increase each visit as long as you have tolerated the previous dose.

Whilst in the cabinet you must wear eye protection – we will give you goggles or a visor.

Men, whose genital area is unaffected by their skin condition, will need to protect their genitals by wearing a single black sock. Women must expose all affected areas. You may wish to bring your own dressing gown to wear whilst you are changing.

Possible side effects:

- Phototherapy can cause itching and/or dryness and sometimes a sunburn type reaction, regular use of moisturising cream should ease this.
- Tell nursing staff if you have any reaction to your treatment, e.g. pinkness, redness, soreness – your phototherapy dose may need to be adjusted.
- If these symptoms are severe, you need to re-apply moisturising cream regularly, drink extra water and take a dose of your regular pain killers. If you are unsure, you may need to seek medical attention.
- **In an emergency (out of office hours), please contact your GP, ring NHS 111 or attend your local drop in centre or emergency department.**
- Some tanning of your skin is likely.
- Your skin condition may temporarily worsen – staff will check your skin at each visit so please discuss any concerns you have with them.
- Prolonged courses of UV can have adverse effects, such as premature skin aging and an increased risk of skin tumours forming. If your condition requires extensive use of UV these risks will be discussed further.

Special precautions to take during the course of treatment:

- Avoid any hairstyle changes/hair removal during the course of treatment, as you may experience a 'sunburn' like reaction to previously unexposed areas.
- Certain foods such as celery, parsnips and figs may make you more sensitive to UV light if eaten in large quantities, so avoid eating too much of them.
- Do not use a solarium, sun bed or sunbathe during the course of treatment.
- Cover up and avoid the sun, use long sleeved tops, long trousers and broad brimmed hats. Keep out of the sun, where ever possible, sit or walk in the shade if necessary.
- Please feel free to discuss any questions or worries related to your skin (with the nurse or) 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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