



**University
Hospitals Sussex**
NHS Foundation Trust

Photodynamic therapy (PDT)

Dermatology

Patient information

What is this information about?

This leaflet aims to provide you with information on what you may experience with Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) and how to care for the area after treatment with PDT.

What is photodynamic therapy?

Photodynamic therapy is a very effective treatment for certain types of pre-cancerous lesions and non-melanoma skin cancers.

It is a non-invasive treatment. This means that you will not need to have an operation.

There are 2 types of treatment:

- With a red lamp.
- With natural daylight.

Do I need to do anything before my treatment?

Your doctor or nurse may ask you to apply a cream 3 to 4 days before your treatment day. Please do not apply it on the day of the treatment.

How many treatments will I need?

This will depend on the type of lesion you have. It will also depend on the type of treatment you have.

Your consultant will tell you how many treatments and what type of treatment during your appointment.

You may need just 1 treatment or photodynamic therapy (PDT). If you have PDT, you may need to come back to the hospital 1 or 2 weeks later.

What will happen when I come for my treatment?

You will be seen by a dermatology nurse specialist who will carry out the procedure.

It will be carried out in 2 stages.

What will happen in stage 1?

If you are treated with the red lamp the first stage of treatment will involve:

- The nurse cleaning the area to be treated and removing any scale (dead skin) from the lesion.
- A special light acting cream applied to the area, which will be covered with a dressing. You will then be asked to return to the department after 3 hours.

If you are treated with daylight the first stage will involve:

- A special sunscreen applied to ALL areas exposed to daylight.
- Any scale or dead skin will be removed.
- A special light acting cream applied thinly to all areas requiring treatment. This should be left in place and not rubbed off. You will then be asked to go outside for 2 hours. During this time the cream will cause a reaction, and will destroy any abnormal cells that are present.

Do I have to stay at the hospital during this time?

No. However, if you feel uncomfortable or unwell you must return to the nurse as soon as possible.

What will happen in stage 2?

If you are treated with the red lamp you will:

- Need to return to the department for the second stage of the treatment after 3 hours.
- Have the area cleaned again, and a red light will be shined onto the area for approximately 10 minutes. This will cause a reaction and will destroy any abnormal cells that are present.

If you are treated with daylight you will:

- Need to return to the department after 2 hours.
- Have the treated area washed.
- Be asked a few questions about your experience of the treatment.

Will it be painful?

If you are treated with the red lamp:

- You may experience some discomfort during the treatment. Usually described as a tingling pain, or burning sensation. This will be reduced by the nurse using a cold spray of water whilst the light is on. This discomfort may continue for up to 24 hours after your treatment. You may wish to take some painkillers that suit you.

If you are treated with daylight:

- You may experience a mild sensation of tingling and tightness. Most people say it is pain free.

What do I do when the treatment has finished?

Soon after the treatment you will be able to go home.

If you are treated with the red lamp:

- The treated area will be covered with a dressing. Keep this area dry, clean and covered for 48 hours. If a dressing is not practical, please ensure the area is protected by sun cream (SPF +30).
- To avoid infection, please wash your hands before removing the dressing or touching the area at any time.

If you are treated with daylight:

- The area will not require a dressing. Please ensure the area is covered with clothing for example a hat for your head or protected by sun cream.

What will I expect when I have removed the dressing?

This will only apply if you have been treated with the red lamp.

The area may weep a little. A crust on the area may have formed. This is normal so do not be alarmed. Healing takes place under the crust so it is important not to disturb it. Once the area has healed, the crust will fall off naturally.

You may prefer to use a dressing during this process, but it is not necessary.

If you wish, you can use moisturizer on the area. If you choose to do so, please use a non-perfumed product. For example: E45.

Please remember it is important not to use this within the first 48 hours after treatment.

How should I look after my skin in the future?

A patient who has had this type of lesion is more at risk of developing new lesions. Therefore you are advised to check your skin regularly and report any change to your doctor.

You should adopt a regime of applying sun protection whenever you are exposed to the sun. This will include applying sun screen (SPF +30) on all parts of your skin that are exposed. For example: face, neck and hands, and wearing protective clothing.

Contact details

Dermatology clinical nurse specialist

Brighton General Hospital 01273 665046

Surgery bookings clerks 01273 665030

If you would like to find out more about Photodynamic Therapy, you may find the following websites helpful:

British Association of Dermatologists

www.bad.org.uk/

Cancer Research UK

www.cancerresearchuk.org/

**Today's research is tomorrow's treatments.
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Ref. number: 2501
Publication date: 03/2025
Review date: 03/2028

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