

Daylight Photodynamic Therapy (PDT)

What is Daylight PDT?

PDT is a technique used to treat pre-cancerous skin lesions on the scalp and face known as Actinic Keratoses (AK). PDT involves applying a special cream to the affected area followed by daylight exposure. The daylight activates the cream resulting in a chemical reaction causing the destruction of the abnormal cells, and leaves healthy skin completely unharmed.

What does it involve?

- PDT is an outpatient treatment carried out by either a doctor or a nurse
- We will ask to take a baseline photograph at the start of treatment to establish effectiveness
- On the day of treatment, please wear clothes to cover exposed areas of the skin or wear sunscreen but **avoid** applying to areas that are going to be treated
- The skin will be cleaned, and a chemical sunscreen will be applied and allowed to dry
- Any crusting on the skin will be removed
- The cream will be applied
- We will ask you to go out in natural daylight for two hours
- On returning to the clinic, the cream will be removed and you can leave the hospital
- You will need to keep the area covered for the rest of the day - please bring a hat or scarf to clinic to wear on your way home
- You will be reviewed in clinic to assess the results of treatment.

How does it work?

PDT works by applying a cream to the affected area and exposing that area to the sun. The cream is activated by the daylight and produces free radicals which destroy damaged skin.

Why use PDT?

- It is a convenient and well-tolerated treatment
- You will often only require one course of treatment
- It is effective at treating difficult and large areas of the face and scalp
- The healing time for PDT is generally around seven days
- It carries a low risk of side effects
- It causes minimal discomfort.



Side effects of treatment

Immediate:

- Pain - you may have a mild tingling sensation
- Inflammation - within the first 2–3 days the skin will become red and tight
- Blistering and ulceration - the treated area may occasionally blister or ulcerate and some crusting may appear
- Infection - the area may become red, swollen, painful and oozing. Please contact The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline or your Keyworker if this occurs.
- The skin may remain red for up to seven days after the treatment depending on the severity of the sun damage.

Later side effects:

- Hypopigmentation of the treated areas - the skin may become darker or paler.

Caring for the treated area

It is okay to shower the following day, but do not have a bath. After showering, pat the area dry avoid any friction to the area. If a scab forms, take care not to dislodge the scab.

Do I need to avoid anything when having PDT?

PDT is a well-tolerated treatment that should not prevent you carrying out normal daily tasks. We recommend that you avoid bathing and swimming whilst the area is healing. You should not have PDT if you are allergic to peanut or soya.

What if it is raining on the day of treatment?

PDT is only given between March and October. If it is raining on the day of treatment, your treatment may need to be rescheduled.

Further treatments

Depending on the severity of the sun damage, further treatments may be required. We will advise you if this is the case.

Contact details

Dermatology Nurses

Tel: 0208 915 6091
(Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm)

Email: Dermatology.nurses@rmh.nhs.uk

Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899
(available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

