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Bath PUVA Treatment Dermatology Department

Further Information

We endeavour to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Matron, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01932 723553 or email pals@asph.nhs.uk. If you still remain concerned please contact our Complaints Manager on 01932 722612 or email complaints@asph.nhs.uk

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Bath PUVA Treatment

WHAT IS BATH PUVA TREATMENT?

Ultraviolet radiation from artificial light sources has been used by dermatologists for almost 100 years and is a widely used and effective treatment in a number of skin disorders. PUVA therapy is a combination of UVA light and a medicament (8-Methoxy-Psoralen = 8-MOP) which sensitises your skin to UVA light with the aim to make the treatment more effective.

PUVA = Psoralen + UVA.

The choice of PUVA over other forms of treatment depends on a wide range of factors including type of skin disease, age, skin type, previous therapy, current medication and many others. In *bath* PUVA treatment Psoralen is administered topically to the skin as a diluted bath solution and the medicament penetrates your skin while you immerse in water. In comparison to oral treatment with Psoralen *tablets*, bath PUVA treatment is usually better tolerated and requires lower UVA doses.

PROCEDURE

All treatments are nurse supervised. Following assessment in the General Dermatology Clinic by a doctor, a nurse will book 15-35 phototherapy appointments for you (the exact number of treatments depends on various factors). The appointment time allocated to you will usually be the same at each visit. Bath PUVA treatment is usually given 2 times per week, at regular intervals. This might be reduced to once a week or even once a fortnight when your skin condition improves.

The Phototherapy unit is open 08.00 – 17.00 Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. The unit is closed on all Bank Holidays. The staff will inform you of any changes.

At each visit you will bath in a pleasantly warm, diluted Psoralen solution for 15 min. The following UVA irradiation is given in a stand-up cabinet surrounded by fluorescent lamps. Initially the UV irradiation will take only a few seconds, gradually increasing to a maximum of approximately 15 minutes. At the first treatment session, only a small test area of your skin will be treated to make sure you tolerate the treatment well. At subsequent sessions, the whole body will be treated.

ABOUT THE BATH

A concentrated Psoralen solution is dispensed by the hospital pharmacy and delivered directly to our department. The 8-MOP concentrate has to be diluted with water before skin contact. You will be shown by the nurse in the phototherapy unit how to measure the bath water and add the concentrate. This will involve adding 1 bottle of Psoralen (30 ml) to 100 litres of bath water (use stick in bathroom and measure water up to blue line). The water temperature should be the same at each visit (not too hot). Please use the water thermometer to make sure the water is approximately 37 Degree Celsius each time. Do not add bath oil or bubbles to the water or use soap while soaking. Set the timer or watch the clock and bath for 15 minutes. You should keep moving in the bath and keep the water agitated to prevent settling of the solution and allow even skin sensitisation. Keep sponging water over any area not submerged. If you splash bath water in your eyes, this should be dried with a towel immediately. If your face needs treatment it

Further Information

If you have any queries regarding the contents of this leaflet please contact Dermatology or Phototherapy Department (St. Peter's Hospital) – telephone **01932 723 322** or **01932 722 234 / 723 720 / 722 748**.

steroids, oils and vitamin D and A preparations directly prior to your UV treatment.

- Plants and weeds may have photosensitisers in them, so avoid handling them for at least two hours before treatment (e.g. cooking with celery, parsnips or figs).
- In order to maximise the benefits of your phototherapy and so as not to inconvenience other patients, regular and punctual attendance is mandatory. Treatment will otherwise have to be withdrawn.
- Jewellery should be removed for treatment. Rings, if worn at the start of treatment, have then to be worn at every treatment thereafter, as areas covered at the start will burn if subsequently exposed.
- Do not indulge in cosmetic facials, peels, or dermabrasions during your course of phototherapy. These could cause the skin on your face to become much more light sensitive.

should be gently swabbed with a flannel soaked in the water. After the bath pat dry with a towel (provided by the hospital), do not rub.

ABOUT THE LIGHT TREATMENT

After the bath, UVA irradiation is given in the light cabinet. Goggles or a visor will be provided to shield your eyes / face. After the light treatment, it is advisable to shower in the phototherapy unit to remove any remaining Psoralen solution from the skin. Dry with a second towel (provided by the hospital). You should then apply an emollient cream, as PUVA bath is drying.

ADVERSE EFFECTS

Mild side effects are common, but usually only short lasting. Most of them can be treated by creams or will spontaneously disappear a few days after stopping treatment. Possible side effects include:

- Erythema: You will get a tan. Sometimes some redness and discomfort of the skin might occur (similar to sunburn). If you start to go red on the day of treatment, apply a steroid cream or lotion, e.g. Dermovate, Betnovate, Elocon or Locoid and get in touch with the phototherapy nurse as soon as possible (Tel. 01932 723 322). We may suspend treatment until symptoms have settled. Very occasionally severe redness or blisters may develop. **You must inform the nurse if you develop any skin redness**, so that we can adjust the UV dose and treat the problem, if necessary.
- Skin Dryness: There will be an increased tendency to dryness of the skin during treatment and for about 4 weeks after treatment. As part of your treatment you must regularly use

emollients, i.e. twice daily to your whole body (not just the lesions).

- Folliculitis: Inflammation of hair follicles may occur. These do not cause discomfort and usually require no treatment or interruption of UV therapy. This may be prevented by applying moisturiser in downward strokes only (in direction of hair growth).
- Herpes Simplex: Those who have had cold sores previously may get a flare up. We therefore recommend sunscreen application to the lips during treatment in order to reduce the risk of cold sores. Remember to ask the nurse for a lip sunscreen before every treatment.
- Photosensitivity: In those who have a concomitant photodermatosis (i.e. a skin condition caused or aggravated by light), a flare up may occur.
- 'PUVA itch': Sometimes the skin can become itchy after light treatment. This may last for some days. Anti-itch emollients such as Balneum PLUS cream or Dermol cream can be helpful (store in the fridge for added relieve). Please let us know if you suffer with this problem.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Please bring a dressing gown each time you come for treatment. You should also bring a bag suitable for your clothes and personal belongings.
- In the five hours following the PUVA bath, you have to protect all soaked skin areas from sunlight (even through window glass) by wearing long trousers, socks, long sleeves, sun protection cream on hands, face and neck etc. (broad-spectrum filter, SPF 50+. Ask the phototherapy nurse for recommendations and/or samples). There is no need to protect your eyes after *bath* PUVA treatment (in contrast to oral PUVA treatment).
- Never use a sun bed or indulge in sunbathing during the entire course of your light treatment. This would increase the risk of burning and makes it impossible to determine the cause and/or dose of burning.
- Always remember to inform the doctor or nurse if you are taking, or about to start any new medication or cream while having UV treatment. This includes over-the-counter products such as St. John's Wort.
- Dry flaky skin will deflect the light, rendering UV therapy less effective. It is therefore especially important to keep your skin well moisturised by applying an emollient liberally twice a day. However, as some creams are not ideal to be used prior to UV treatment, we recommend to apply only Diprobase cream, Cetraben cream, Oilatum cream or Doublebase before treatment on phototherapy days. Avoid tar containing creams,