
Dermatology Department

Phototherapy Unit: UVB Therapy

UVB – What is it?

UVB stands for ultraviolet B radiation. This is the part of the natural sunlight that causes tanning and sunburn, and is helpful in the treatment of several different skin disorders. Patients are referred for treatment by a dermatologist.

The UVB machines

A TLO1 machine which contains fluorescent tubes and emits narrowband UVB is used in the Phototherapy Units. The tubes are built into boxes, rather like shower cabinets, into which you step for treatment.

During treatment you must wear goggles to protect your eyes; these will be provided by the department. Make sure they fit correctly and do not allow any light to penetrate.

The treatment sessions

Fair skinned people, who burn easily, will receive lower doses than dark skinned people who rarely burn in the sun.

The treatment sessions may gradually be increased from a few seconds up to approximately 15 minutes if your skin tolerates the treatment and does not burn.

If you notice any pinkness / redness, burning or soreness tell the nurse before further treatment as the treatment time may need to be reduced or the affected area may need covering.

Frequency

Treatment is usually given two or three times a week. Treatment courses vary, but you can expect to attend for treatment for 6-10 weeks. Maintenance therapy is avoided to reduce the cumulative (gradually additive) damaging effects of the UVB.

Unfortunately, the clinic staff are unable to take care of children while you have treatment. We suggest that either you make alternative arrangements for childcare on the day of your appointment or someone who is able to do this comes to the unit with you.

Precautions to take/patient checklist

- Dry, itchy skin can be treated by moisturisers and cream such as Aqueous cream, Diprobase, Doublebase, 50/50, E45 and Unguentum M. These are available on prescription and also over the counter in a pharmacy.
- Please inform the nurse or doctor if you have been started on any new medication as some medicines make you more sensitive to light.
- You should not sunbathe or use a sun bed while on UVB therapy.
- Prior to treatment your skin should be clean and dry. You may apply water-based emollients – Diprobase, Aqueous cream – to skin before treatment, but try to ensure emollient is applied no less than two hours before your treatment time.
- Do not wear deodorant, perfume or aftershave prior to treatment. Some of them contain oils, which sensitise the skin to light and may result in patchy discoloration of the skin. This may take many months to fade.
- Women do not need to wear underwear in the phototherapy cabinet. Male patients are required to protect their genital area with dark underwear or a dark sock during treatment.

Side effects of UVB

Side effects may occur from UVB, but these are reduced if you follow the precautions above.

1. Your skin may burn, blister or become dry and itchy.
2. Long term use of UVB may age the skin and slightly increase the risk of developing skin cancer.
3. If you notice anything let the nurse, doctor or GP know.

Help and advice if you experience problems following treatment

If you experience problems following your treatment – marked redness, soreness or blistering of the skin – please contact the Phototherapy Unit, the telephone number for the Phototherapy Unit at Addenbrooke's Hospital is 01223 274408. The telephone number for the Phototherapy Unit at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital is 01480 418704. Outside of the centre's normal working hours an answer machine will take messages or you can contact 01223 245151 and ask to be put through to the on call dermatologist.

Appointments

- Please try to be on time for your appointment as the clinic runs to a very tight schedule.
- If you are unable to keep an appointment please try to inform us so that your appointment time can be re-allocated. Three consecutive failures to keep an appointment without notice will result in your treatment being discontinued and your discharge from the Phototherapy Department.

- Appointments can be made in person at reception in the Phototherapy Unit or by telephoning the number below:

01223 274408 - Phototherapy Unit at Addenbrooke's Hospital

01480 418704 - Phototherapy Unit at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital

Self help groups

There are a number of self-help groups across the country. These groups offer support to sufferers, publish journals and encourage research. Here are some useful addresses.

Psoriasis Association

7 Milton Street
Northampton
NN2 7JG

Telephone: 01604 711129

Fax: 01604 792894

Email: mail@psoriasis.demon.co.uk

Website: www.psoriasis-association.org.uk

National Eczema Society

163 Eversholt Street
London
NW1 1BU

Telephone: 0207 388 4097

Fax: 0207 388 5882

Website: <http://www.eczema-org>

The Vitiligo Society

125 Kennington Road
London
SE11 6SF

Telephone: 0207 840 0855

Fax: 0207 840 0866

Website: www.vitiligosociety.org.uk
ken126@vitiligosociety.org.uk



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS Stop Smoking Helpline on 0800 169 0 169

Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or

patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk



Document history

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Department	Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ www.cuh.org.uk
Contact number	01223 245151
Publish/Review date	October 2011/October 2014
File name	UVB_therapy.doc
Version number/Ref	4/PIN1301