

Photodynamic therapy (PDT)

This leaflet explains more about the photodynamic therapy (PDT), including the benefits, risks and alternatives. It also provides advice about wound care following the treatment.

If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

What is photodynamic therapy (PDT)?

PDT is a light treatment for some skin conditions – usually small superficial skin cancers and pre-cancerous lesions on the skin.

The treatment involves applying a cream (containing the ingredient methyl aminolaevulinate, known as Metvix®) to the lesion, and shining a bright light on it three hours later. The light alone is harmless, but when the cream and light are combined, they treat the affected area of your skin by destroying the abnormal skin cells.

What are the advantages of PDT?

- Rapid healing with good cosmetic results, meaning that the scarring will be minimal.
- Non-invasive treatment – no cuts need to be made to the skin.
- PDT can be repeated if necessary, and it does not prevent you from receiving other treatments for your condition in the future if you need them.

Are there any side effects associated with PDT?

There are no common long-term side effects from the treatment, but there are a few minor drawbacks:

- You may have some discomfort during and slightly after the light treatment. A cold air fan is used during treatment to make you more comfortable.
- The skin where the lesion(s) has been treated may temporarily change colour. It may turn brown, like a suntan. This is known as hyperpigmentation and may take some time to go away. Rarely, you may get some permanent whiteness to the area, which may look like a flat scar. This is called hypopigmentation.

How many treatments will I need?

For the best results, we recommend two sessions of PDT, one week apart. Usually this is all that is necessary. We will give you a follow-up appointment after the treatments to check for any sign of persistence or recurrence of the lesion(s).

Are there any alternative treatments?

Your doctor has recommended PDT as the best treatment for your specific condition. Other treatments may also be available, depending on the type of lesion you have. Please discuss this directly with your doctor or specialist nurse.

What will happen when I arrive on the day of my treatment?

The first stage of PDT is to apply the Metvix® cream. We will do this when you arrive in the morning.

We will remove any scale or crusts and roughen the surface of the lesion to help your skin absorb the cream. We will then apply the Metvix® cream and place a dressing over the area to keep out ordinary light.

The cream needs to be absorbed for three hours. During this time, you can stay in the hospital or leave and come back to the unit at the time we give you.

The second stage of PDT is to apply the light (three hours later).

Your dressing will be removed and a red light will be shone directly onto your lesion(s). This will only have an effect where the cream has been applied. We will give you special glasses to shield your eyes from the bright light.

The light is applied for 9 to 17 minutes. You may feel a tingling feeling during the treatment. This tells us that the therapy is working. If the treatment becomes too uncomfortable, please let us know. We can relieve the discomfort for you with a cooling fan.

After the light treatment, we will put a dressing over the treated area.

How should I care for the treated area at home?

1. **Keep the dressing on for 24 hours** to avoid sunlight directly on the treated area.
2. Remove the dressing and wash in the shower.
3. Pat gently dry.
4. A crust may form on the treated area. Do not pick it. Leave to come away naturally with subsequent daily washes.
5. There is no need for further dressings.
6. Follow the steps above until the treated area is completely healed. This may take a week or two.

What should I expect after my treatment?

You should have little or no pain, with any discomfort lasting a few days at most.

After the dressing has been removed, the treated area will probably crust over. This is normal and healing takes place under this crust. In some cases, the area treated with PDT may appear pink, or it may swell, blister or ooze slightly. These symptoms are also normal and are just signs of a stronger response to the treatment. They will normally settle down within a few days. If the symptoms continue for longer than this, please contact the PDT nurse using the number in the contact us box on the next page.

What happens next?

You will be given a time to come back one week later for the second part of this treatment 'cycle'.

Once the treatment cycle has been completed, you will be reviewed in a follow-up clinic.

Contact us

For **administration** purposes only, please contact reception on **0207188 6407**.

To contact the **PDT nurse** please leave a message on **0207 1888 6284** (8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday). Please leave a short message, including your name and telephone number, on the answerphone and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

This is not an emergency service. In an emergency, please contact your GP or go to your local A&E department.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

e: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas'

t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy's

e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.

t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

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