Worcestershire NHS
Acute Hospitals NHS Trust

Department of Physiotherapy

Patient Information: Systemic PUVA

Introduction

This leaflet provides you with a brief overview of systemic PUVA. It is your responsibility to ensure you have read the leaflet in order to assist the effectiveness and safety of therapy. Please ask your clinician any additional questions if you require any more information.

What is PUVA?

Phototherapy is the term used for light treatment. Natural sunlight contains a range of wavelengths or rays. PUVA is a treatment using UVA rays (mainly 320-400 nm) emitted by an artificial sources, such as lamps or light tubes in a cabinet and a medication known as psoralen which causes the skin to become more sensitive to ultraviolet light. The advantage of this is it penetrates deeper into the skins layers and is used to treat a variety of skin disorders e.g. psoriasis, eczema, mycosis fungoides. Unfortunately there are side effects with the tablets including nausea. Psoralen medication is not prescribed to pregnant ladies as the effects of the medication on an unborn child are unknown. Birth control should be used during the PUVA therapy, including men receiving treatment, and if you become pregnant during treatment inform the clinical staff immediately and stop taking the psoralen tablets. It is also advised not to breast feed whilst taking psoralen medications as again it may pass to the child in the mother's milk. Please read the psoralen medication leaflet and discuss any concerns or side effects experienced with your clinician to ensure safe use.

If you take more than the prescribed amount of tablets inform your clinician immediately as this increases the risk of burning or blistering.

What happens when I start PUVA treatment?

Each follow up appointment lasts 10-15 minutes. The first treatment will only be a short time, about 40-90 seconds. The treatment will then gradually increase in time as the dose increases at each treatment session. This treatment is given 2-3 times a week, therefore treatment lasts for about 6-12 weeks. Generally 16-24 treatments are given but this varies for each person depending on how your skin and skin condition responds to treatment.

What should I do before the treatment?

DO:

1. Take the psoralen tablets 2 hours (8 MOP) or 2 ½ hours (5MOP) prior to your PUVA treatment. These are best taken after a light or greasy meal, e.g. toast & milk, as this may reduce nausea.
2. **Put your tested sunglasses on immediately after taking the psoralen.**
3. Tell your clinician if you have taken any additional medication, or had any of your medication changed. This includes herbal remedies or creams.
4. Avoid caffeine and paracetamol.

DON'T:

1. Use any products on your skin before having treatment. This includes perfumed substances, aftershave, or cosmetics/make up and topical creams/ointments.
2. Drink alcohol prior to treatment.

This is because these can make your skin become more sensitive enhancing the action of PUVA and increasing the risk of sunburn reaction.

What happens at the treatment session?

The clinician will check you are happy to have treatment and review your skin condition plus response to any previous treatments. Tell your clinician if you went pink or burnt after the last session as you may notice this the evening or day after treatment but it may longer be seen at the next treatment session. It is very important to report this as it helps to correctly change your treatment dose to prevent further burning. You will be given special goggles to wear during treatment to protect your eyes when you are in the cabinet. These must not be removed during treatment and you are advised to avoid staring directly into the tubes light whilst in the cabinet. You may also be given a facial visor and asked to apply sun block to your lips for extra protection if you have had cold sores or to a small area if localised burning occurred. Male patients must wear fitted thick black/navy blue coloured pants or a sock to protect the genitalia as this has been shown to efficiently block the UV rays therefore avoiding the risk of genital skin tumours. Also if some areas of your skin are unaffected it may be possible to cover those areas to minimise PUVA exposure e.g. fitted vest/t-shirt but this will need to be dark/ navy blue. Care must be taken to ensure each session any clothing worn is in the same position to prevent localised burning of newly exposed skin. Once you are ready you can step into the cabinet and the clinician will re-check you have the correct clothing and protective items needed. You will be told the time of treatment before the door is closed to start the treatment. After treatment is completed you are advised to apply moisturiser which is provided but you are welcome to bring your own if preferred. It is important to do this as it helps reduce the side effects of skin dryness and itching.

After the treatment session

The next 24 hours your skin remains sensitised by the psoralen therefore you are advised to:

- Continue wearing your tested sunglasses in daylight hours
- Continue wearing long sleeve tops, trousers, wide brimmed hats and gloves to cover your skin. Remember UVA can travel through glass therefore this advice is for indoors as well as outdoors in daylight hours.
- Use sun block factor 30+ on exposed skin areas e.g. neck, faces, ears.

During your course of treatment it is also important you don't:

- Have your hair cut shorter or wax. This is to prevent skin suddenly being treated with UV resulting in localised severe burning.
- Use any other sources of UV radiation e.g. such as sun beds, sun lamps, and sunbathing.

Side Effects

Short term side effects from PUVA treatment:

- A sunburn like reaction which could be sore and red up to 72 hours after treatment. This particularly affects those with a fair complexion. If a more severe reaction occurs, i.e. bright red skin, peeling or blistering, contact your clinician, GP or A&E immediately for further advice and treatment. You may be given a cream to use and your treatment maybe missed or stopped.
- Skin dryness and itching.
- Pruritis can develop known as the 'PUVA itch' but it is not common.
- A prickling sensation in the skin
- The psoralen tablets side effects including nausea. See medication leaflet.
- Your skin may darken or tan after several treatment sessions.

Long term side effects from PUVA treatment:

- It is reported that about 150-200 treatments will increase the long term risk of aging and skin cancer. Patients with fair skin are more at risk. These guidelines are based on receiving one course of treatment a year. It is very important to attend regularly for treatment to ensure the treatment is as effective as possible for your skin condition.

- Repeated courses of PUVA will age the skin just as natural sunlight does. These changes may include wrinkling, freckles, dryness & thickening of the skin. It is therefore good to regularly monitor your skin and if you have any concerns discuss these with your consultant or G.P who will also be monitoring your skin.
- There is also a theoretical risk of damaging the lens of the eye potentially leading to cataracts but this should be prevented if correct use of goggles during treatment and protective sunglasses during the 24 hour period your eyes are sensitised to UV by the psoralen medication.

If you miss an appointment without informing us within 48 hours, you will be discharged from treatment. An answer phone is available within the department so please leave your name and telephone number if you are unable to speak directly to a member of staff.

Contacts

For further information please contact the relevant department you attended:

Physiotherapy Department
Alexandra Hospital
Redditch
Tel: 01527 512114

Other information

The following internet websites contain information that you may find useful.

- www.worcsacute.nhs.uk
  Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
- www.patient.co.uk
  Information fact sheets on health and disease
- www.rcoa.ac.uk
  Information leaflets by the Royal College of Anaesthetists about 'Having an anaesthetic'
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
  On-line health encyclopaedia

Patient Services Department

It is important that you speak to the department you have been referred to (see the contacts section) if you have any questions (for example, about medication) before your investigation or procedure.

If you have any concerns about your treatment, you can contact the Patient Services Department on 0300 123 1733. The Patient Services staff will be happy to discuss your concerns and give any help or advice.

If you have a complaint and you want it to be investigated, you should write direct to the Chief Executive at Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester WR5 1DD or contact the Patient Services Department for advice.

Please contact Patient Services on 0300 123 1733 if you would like this leaflet in another language or format (such as Braille or easy read).

Bengali

"আপনি যদি এই লিফলেটটি বিকল্প কোনো ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে (যেমন ব্রেইল বা সহজ পাঠ) চান, তাহলে এই নম্বরে 0300 123 1733 প্যাশেন্ট সার্ভিসের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।"

Urdu

"اگرآپ کویہ دستی اشتہار کسی مُتبادل زُبان یا ساخت میں چاہیے (جیسے کہ بریل / ایزی ریڈ) تو پیشنٹ سروسز سے 0300 123 1733 پر رابطہ کریں۔"

Portuguese

"Por favor, contacte os Serviços de Apoio ao Paciente através do número 0300 123 1733, caso precise deste folheto numa língua alternativa ou formato (como Braille / fácil de ler)."

Polish

"Jeżeli pragniecie Państwo otrzymać tę broszurę w innym jeżyku lub formacie (Braille / duży druk) proszę skontaktować się z Obsługą Pacjentów pod numerem 0300 123 1733."

Chinese

"如果您需要此份傳單的其他語言選擇或其他版本
(如盲人點字版/易讀版容易的閱讀),請致電 0300 123 1733與病患服務處聯繫。"

Comments

We would value your opinion on this leaflet, based on your experience of having this procedure done. Please put any comments in the box below and return them to the Clinical Governance Department, Finance Department, Worcestershire Royal Hospital, Charles Hastings Way, Worcester, WR5 1DD.

Name of leaflet:_____ Date:_____

Comments:

Thank you for your help.