



York and Scarborough  
Teaching Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Photo-Dynamic Therapy

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Dermatology Department on one of the following  
telephone numbers:

York Patients: 01904 726629

The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE

Scarborough Patients: 01723 368111

Scarborough Hospital, Woodlands Drive, Scarborough,  
YO12 6QL

Selby Patients: 01904 724296

The New Selby War Memorial Hospital, Doncaster  
Road, Selby, YO8 9BX

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this leaflet is to give Your treatment will take place in the Dermatology Clinic treatment area.

## **What is Photodynamic Therapy?**

Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) is a treatment, which combines a powerful non-laser light source, and a photosensitising cream, called Metvix. This cream is applied for a certain time, prescribed by your consultant.

## **What skin conditions are treated with PDT?**

PDT treatment is prescribed for pre-cancerous skin conditions such as Bowen's Disease and Actinic Keratosis (AK) and for some superficial basal cell carcinomas (BCC's).

## **How is the treatment carried out?**

Your treatment will be given by a dermatology nurse.

The photosensitising cream is applied to the area of the skin lesion being treated, with a small one centimetre margin of unaffected skin. Most lesions will be prepped to remove any rough skin before the cream is applied, this normally done by gentle rubbing, but on occasion a surgical tool called a curettage may be used. This would be discussed with you,

A transparent film is then used to cover the cream, ensuring that the cream stays in the correct area. A cotton dressing will then be used to cover the whole area, until you return for the light treatment, three hours later.

When you return for your light treatment, the nurse removes all dressings and the photosensitising cream. Then you will sit or lie in a comfortable position to allow the light source to be lined up with the skin lesion being treated. The length of treatment will depend on the overall size of the skin lesion being treated. On average this takes ten minutes.

During treatment, you may be asked to wear goggles to protect your eyes from the brightness of the light source, and to stay as still as possible. The nurse will be readily available throughout the whole treatment time.

## **Will it be painful?**

You will be able to feel the treatment when the light source is administered. This can be painful, although some patients have described it as a warm, prickly sensation. If you do find the treatment painful inform the nurse, who can stop the treatment and spray cold water onto the area to ease it.

## **How does this treatment work?**

The photosensitising cream is absorbed easily into the damaged skin cells, but not into undamaged skin cells. When the light is shown on the skin, it activates the cream and oxygen within the damaged cells, causing photo-oxidation, which kills off the damaged cells.

## **Is it a safe treatment?**

Yes, PDT is tolerated well by patients. It only causes mild redness and inflammation (swelling), similar to that of a mild burn. A crust may form over the treated area, but once this has separated minimal scarring occurs. It is not usual for the surrounding healthy skin to be damaged during treatment.

**Important:** This treatment is not suitable for patients with peanut allergies as it contains a peanut additive.

## **How many treatments will I need?**

It will depend on the diagnosis of your skin lesion. Some require one treatment, while others require two treatments, one week apart.

## **What happens after treatment?**

At the end of your treatment a cotton dressing is applied to the area, this must remain in place for 24 hours.

A reaction similar to a superficial burn may occur, which may crust and have some leakage.

You are able to wash the area with water after 48 hours, and pat dry gently.

## **Will I see the consultant again after completion of my treatment?**

The nurse will arrange a follow up appointment with your consultant after the last prescribed treatment; this is usually two to three months later.

## **Who will I contact if I have a problem after the treatment?**

If you have any further questions or concerns about PDT you can phone the Dermatology Department, during clinic opening times, which can be found on the front page of this leaflet.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

Sister Lynda Greetham, The Dermatology Department,  
The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or  
telephone 01904 726629.

## **Teaching, Training and Research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

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Owner	Lois Alderson Sister - Dermatology
Date first issued	November 2002, updated November 2020
Review Date	January 2024
Version	8 (issued January 2021)
Approved by	Dr Thompson Dermatology Consultant
Document Reference	PIL 64 v8

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