

Department of Dermatology, Churchill Hospital

# Ultraviolet B (UVB) light treatment

Information for patients



This leaflet provides written information about Ultraviolet B (UVB) treatment.

## What is UVB light treatment?

UVB is a form of ultraviolet (UV) light in the sun's rays. In UVB light treatment, these rays ('short waves' also known as 'narrow band') are used. These rays are responsible for burning and tanning, but can help reduce inflammation in the skin.

UVB is used for many cases of psoriasis, particularly when it is proving resistant to other treatments or is so widespread. Ultraviolet light is not a long-term cure, but can improve your condition for a period of time. It is also useful in several other conditions, including generalized eczema and prevention of light allergy (polymorphic light eruption).

## What is involved?

UVB treatment is usually given three times weekly. The machine is a large cabinet with panels of fluorescent tubes. Initially treatment takes only a few seconds to minutes. This is gradually increased at each visit depending on your response. Treatment is normally stopped as soon as the skin is clear and an "average" first course of UVB for psoriasis lasts roughly 2-3 months. The treatment does not work for everyone and in that case treatment would be stopped.

During the actual treatment protective eye goggles must be worn at all times in the cabinet.

It is important to attend all your appointments for optimal treatment. Please let the nurse know of any new medications you have started.

## Side effects

The main side effects of UVB are sunburn and dryness of the skin. It also slightly increases the risk of developing skin cancer later, but the main cause of this is exposure to the natural sun over the years.

## **Burns**

To minimize the risk of burning, the dose of light is started very low and is gradually built up as your skin becomes tolerant. You should always tell the nurse before your treatment if your skin was sore and red after the last treatment, as it may be necessary for the next dose to be adjusted or omitted altogether.

## **Itching and dryness**

These are both common and can be helped by using a simple moisturizer regularly eg. Cetraben cream, E45 cream, Emulsifying ointment. The moisturizer should also be applied before your treatment to improve the effect of light on your skin.

## **Cold sores**

Those who have had cold sores (Herpes Simplex virus) in the past may get a repeat infection. Apply a lip sunscreen prior to each treatment to try and prevent this.

Please ask staff at the time of the treatment if you have any further questions

or contact

## **Department of Dermatology**

Churchill Hospital

Headington

Oxford

OX3 7LJ

Tel (Phototherapy Suite): **01865 228226**

**(out of hours emergencies** – please call switchboard on **01865 741841** and ask to speak to the on-call dermatology registrar).

Further information can also be obtained from the British Association of Dermatologists website:

**<http://www.bad.org.uk/site/1223/default.aspx>**

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

Ben Esdaile  
Oxford Department of Dermatology  
Version 2 July 2012  
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Oxford University Hospital NHS Trust  
Oxford OX3 9DU  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk)

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