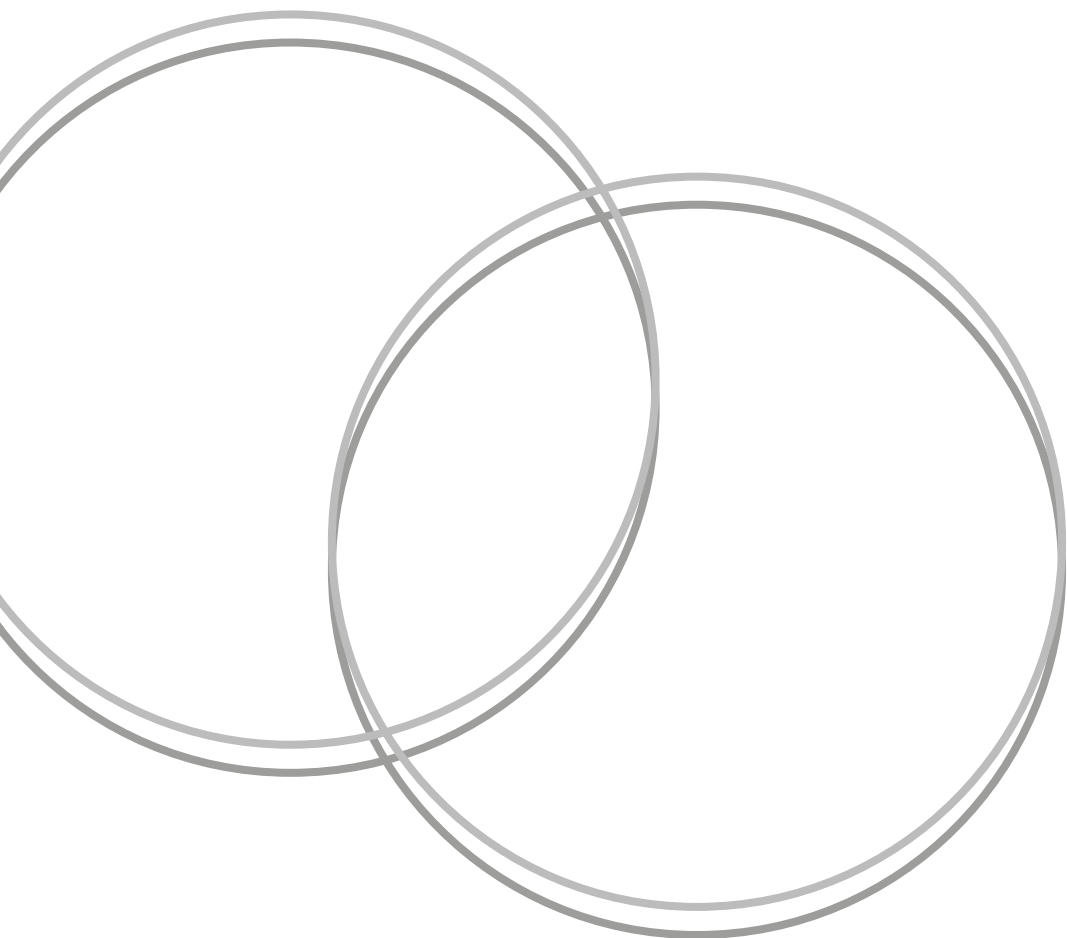




Oxford University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Hand and Foot PUVA Treatment

Information for patients



Department of Dermatology,
Churchill Hospital

What is Hand and Foot PUVA?

PUVA is a form of therapy in which a combination of Psoralen (a medication) and UVA (ultraviolet A) light are used to treat certain skin conditions.

Psoralens are chemicals, found in a variety of plants, which temporarily make the skin very sensitive to the effects of UVA light.

PUVA can be used to treat the entire skin, or just localised areas, such as the hands and feet.

With hand and foot PUVA, a psoralen gel is applied to the affected areas 15 minutes before each treatment with the UVA lamp.

Psoralen gel is an 'unlicensed' drug – this means that the product does not have a full product license in the UK. Unlicensed medicines are only used when there is no other suitable licensed product available. Pharmacy will have ensured that the product has been manufactured to a good standard and is of acceptable quality. Products such as Psoralen gel are used across the UK only within specialist centres for the purpose of administering light treatment. If you have any concerns, please discuss this with the Phototherapy staff.

Patients will be asked to sign a consent form before treatment is started.

Uses

Localised PUVA may be used to treat a number of skin conditions, including:

- Palmoplantar pustulosis 100% Psoriasis of the hands and feet.
- Hand and foot dermatitis /eczema.
- Vitiligo.

Treatment course

The treatments are usually given twice a week, for up to 10 weeks. Depending on the response, some patients may require a longer course. Discussion regarding course length will be made upon individual patient needs or requirements.

How long does each treatment take?

The gel is applied with the supervision of the nurses in the clinic 15 minutes before exposure to the UVA light. The exposure time to the UVA light is initially short (to avoid burning the skin) but is gradually increased as your skin becomes accustomed to the UVA. The maximum duration of UVA light exposure is rarely longer than ten minutes.

How long do the benefits last?

PUVA treatment does not cure psoriasis or eczema, however most patients find that their condition remains clear for several months, and often much longer. The results of PUVA on vitiligo are less predictable.

Side effects

All treatments have associated risks and side effects, although for most patients undergoing hand and foot PUVA these are minimal, and well tolerated. Talk to your phototherapy nurse about any problems you are experiencing during the treatment.

Burning

Like natural sunlight, PUVA therapy can cause a sunburn-like reaction, particularly in people with fair skin. This most often occurs 48 to 72 hours after the second or third treatment. Because of this, the initial dose of light (i.e. the time spent exposed to the UVA lamp) you receive is kept very low, and then gradually increased. The phototherapy nurse will assess your skin's response to the light and make adjustments as required. You may need to skip one or two treatments.

It is important to remember that skin that has been treated with psoralens will remain light sensitive for several hours and should be protected from sunlight after your treatment, even on overcast days, by wearing gloves and fitted shoes and socks.

Avoid using any creams such as cocoa or shea butter, ointments, perfumes, or any alcohol-based toiletries on the day of your treatment. Do not use any coal tar preparations for at least 24 hours before Hand and Foot PUVA treatment. This is because some of these preparations may increase light sensitivity and might lead to a 'sunburn effect' following PUVA treatment. They may also affect the absorption of the psoralen into the skin.

Dry or itchy skin

It is common for the skin to feel itchy for a short time after each treatment, and your skin may become dryer than usual. Regular use of a moisturiser usually helps improve both of these problems.

Long-term side effects

PUVA, like natural sunlight, can cause the skin to age prematurely, and may be associated with a slightly increased risk of developing skin cancer. The risk of developing skin cancer is related to your lifetime exposure to the sun as well as other factors, such as how easily you burn – the additional risk of hand and foot PUVA is very small, but is higher if you have repeated courses of this treatment over many years.

It is important to check your skin regularly and report any new lesions of concern to your local doctor.

If you have further questions, please contact:

Dermatology Department

Churchill Hospital

Old Road

Oxford

OX3 7LE

Telephone number: **01865 228 226** (Phototherapy)

Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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