

Guidelines for Bath PUVA

Ultraviolet light reduces inflammation of the skin and can help in various inflammatory skin disorders.

PUVA (Psoralen + UVA), also sometimes called photochemotherapy, is a treatment in which UVA radiation is combined with a sensitiser (a chemical that increases the effect of UVA on the skin) called a psoralen.

Bath PUVA treatment involves making your skin extra sensitive to UVA by means of a psoralen, by the application of a solution which is added to the bath water.

UVA treatment will be given three times a fortnight (Monday - Friday - Wednesday) with a minimum of 72 hours interval between treatments.

What reasons might prevent you having Bath PUVA

- If you are unable to attend regularly for treatment.
- If you are unable to stand unaided for up to ten minutes.
- If you are unable to get in and out of the bath safely.
- If your skin condition is made worse by natural sunlight.
- If you have xeroderma pigmentosum or lupus erythematosus.
- If you have had skin cancer.
- If you are taking a medicine which suppresses your immune system, such as ciclosporin or methotrexate.

- PUVA treatment may not be used if you have severe liver or kidney disease.
- If you are taking medicines that make you more sensitive to sunlight.
- If you have reached the maximum number of light treatments in a lifetime.
- If you are pregnant

Do I need to avoid anything whilst having Bath PUVA?

- Medicines that make you more sensitive to ultraviolet light as these may make you more likely to burn. You should inform the phototherapy staff of any new medicines prescribed or purchased, including herbal preparations.
- Additional sun exposure or the use of sunbeds.
- Excessive quantities of foods such as celery, carrots, figs, citrus fruits, parsnips and parsley; these can make you more sensitive to ultraviolet light and therefore more likely to burn.
- Perfumed products which can make your skin more sensitive to ultraviolet light and therefore more likely to burn.
- Creams, ointments and lotions other than moisturisers, unless directed by the phototherapy staff.
- Having your haircut short whilst having Bath PUVA, as they may result in burning of previously covered skin.

What are the potential side effects of phototherapy?

The short-term side effects of phototherapy include:

- Redness and discomfort (sunburn).
- Dry and itchy skin.
- Folliculitis - inflammation of the hair roots may occur. This does not cause discomfort and usually require no treatment or interruption of the UV therapy.
- A sunlight-induced rash called polymorphic light eruption may develop whilst receiving ultraviolet light.
- Cold sores - if you are prone to these it is advisable to cover the area usually affected with sun block when having ultraviolet treatment.
- Blisters in areas of psoriasis.
- Worsening of skin disease.

Potential long-term side effects of phototherapy include:

- Premature skin ageing.
- Skin cancer (the risk of skin cancer is related to your total lifetime exposure to ultraviolet light, and other factors such as how easily you burn in the sun; the risk is higher with repeated courses of PUVA).

Other Important Information

What happens during treatment:

- The nurse will fill the bath to the mark with lukewarm water, then add 30mls of 1.2% 8-MOP solution (psoralen).
- You will soak in the bath for 10 minutes, taking care to gently swish the solution around and ensuring all parts of the body are evenly exposed to the solution, except the face which should be kept dry.

- Whilst in the cabinet you will need to wear UV opaque goggles
- All male patients will need to wear a pouch or dark sock to shield their genitalia during treatment in the cabinet
- Pregnancy should be avoided during PUVA treatment.
- You should not expose any part of yourself to strong sunlight after treatment as your skin has been sensitised to ultra violet light and you may get burned. You should apply sunscreen on exposed sites for 24 hours after PUVA treatment.
- Protect yourself from sunlight by wearing appropriate clothing.
- Always consult the Dermatology Department before starting on any new tablets or creams during a course of PUVA therapy.
- Please inform nursing staff of any problems, such as soreness, redness, itching or burning at each visit as soon as possible if you are worried or uncertain. It may be necessary to reduce the amount of treatment or miss treatments. PUVA will not be given if the skin is too red at the next appointment.
- If you fail to attend your appointment for Bath PUVA without contacting the department this may affect your course of treatment.

If you would like further information and support regarding your skin condition, you can find helpful resources and support groups on the following website; <https://skinsupport.org.uk>

Dermatology Department

01392 405518

If you are unable to attend for treatment you, a friend or relative must phone to let the Dermatology Department know

This information can be offered in other formats on request, including a language other than English and Braille.

RD&E (Eastern Services) main switchboard: 01392 411611

NDDH (Northern Services) main switchboard: 01271 322577

For Royal Devon services log on to: <https://royaldevon.nhs.uk>

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