

What is Photodynamic Therapy

(If this is a part of your treatment plan, Dr. Hoyer put an order in for this. This means you will be getting a phone call within two weeks to schedule PDT. If you don't receive this call, please contact the office to let us know.)

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is a special treatment performed in the office with a topical photosensitizing agent Levulan and the correct wavelength of light. This treatment is FDA-approved to remove pre-cancerous skin lesions called actinic keratoses (AK's). There is also evidence that it could treat superficial non-melanoma skin cancers and can improve cosmetic sun damage. The treatment usually takes 2-3 hours in the office. First the agent Levulan (a clear liquid) is applied to your skin (usually to the whole face or to top of scalp or to tops of hands/forearms) by a nurse or medical assistant. Then you wait 1-3 hours for the Levulan to be absorbed. (Bring good reading material for this stage.) After that, the nurse or medical assistant shines the correct wavelength of light to the skin treated with Levulan. This final step takes less than 20 minutes.

How Many Treatments Should I Have

To achieve maximum improvement, a series of 2-3 treatments spaced about 4 weeks apart is often recommended. On the other hand, some patients are happy with just one treatment and others do the treatment much more frequently.

Although PDT is a "field" treatment that can treat more actinic keratoses than cryotherapy (freezing with liquid nitrogen), unfortunately no treatment removes all pre-cancerous cells. So whether you have one or multiple PDT treatments, you will still probably benefit from cryotherapy of individual lesions from time to time.

Advantages

1. Easier and faster than applying Efudex (topical 5FU cream), Aldara/Zyclara (imiquimod), Carac or Solaraze
2. Less painful than liquid nitrogen
3. Reduced scarring and improved cosmetic outcomes than liquid nitrogen
4. Destroys more pre-cancerous actinic keratoses than liquid nitrogen

Expectations Following Photodynamic Therapy

Day 0-2

Mild to moderate discomfort

Redness and mild to moderate swelling of treated skin

If excessive oozing, swelling, tenderness, fever, yellowish discharge, abrupt blistering, CALL PHYSICIAN

Day 3-7

Gradually improving discomfort

Redness, flaking of skin, some crusting and oozing, decreasing swelling

Day 8-15

Flakiness, milder redness, mild exfoliation, slight pigmentary skin changes.

Skin Care Following Photodynamic Therapy

Day of Treatment:

Thin layer of vaseline followed by facial moisturizer with sunscreen SPF >30

Sunscreen to exposed skin (not only treated areas)

Ice packs to affected areas every 3-4 hours post treatment, for 15-20 min

Tylenol as needed for pain

Strictly avoid sun exposure and fluorescent lights (incandescent lights are fine)

Day 1 – 2 following treatment:

Wash gently with mild soap and water, pad dry, then apply Vaseline and sunscreen with SPF >30

Ice packs every 4 hours as needed for discomfort (for 15-20 min)

Tylenol as needed for pain

Strictly avoid sun exposure and fluorescent lights (incandescent lights are fine)

If significant inflammation develops (redness, blisters, clear ooze), continue steps above, but add:

White vinegar soaks to affected areas (1 teaspoon vinegar in cup of cold water) 3 times daily.

Dry gently by padding (not rubbing).

Apply hydrocortisone 1% cream to treated area.

If you experience discomfort, fever, increasing swelling of treated skin, yellowish discharge, CALL PHYSICIAN.

Day 3-7:

Wash gently with mild soap and water, pad dry, then apply vaseline and sunscreen with SPF >30.

Avoid sun exposure.

Day 8-15:

Wash gently with soap and water daily.

Moisturizer with sunscreen daily (SPF>30).

May apply make up (regular or green tinted for red areas).

Avoid sun exposure.