



Patient & Family Guide

2024

PUVA Phototherapy



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PUVA Phototherapy

Your dermatologist (skin doctor) has ordered PUVA phototherapy (light therapy) for your skin.

How does PUVA phototherapy work?

- PUVA phototherapy is a combination of:
 - › A topical (put on the skin) psoralen ointment
 - › Ultraviolet A (UVA) light

Psoralen makes the UVA light work better.

- Before starting phototherapy treatments, you will be assessed by the phototherapy team. They will decide the amount of light that is right for you.
- Treatments are usually done over 4 to 6 weeks (1 to 1 ½ months) and may last for 8 weeks (2 months). This will depend on how your skin responds to the treatments.
- You will have treatments 2 to 3 times a week. As your skin improves, you may come for treatments less often or your treatments may be stopped.

How do I get ready for my treatments?

- Some medications may raise your risk of getting a sunburn. Please tell a member of the phototherapy team if you are taking any new medications (including puffers, patches, injections, creams, and over-the-counter or herbal products) or if your prescribed medications change.
- **2 hours before each treatment:**
 - › Put the psoralen ointment on the areas to be treated.
 - › Keep the areas to be treated covered with clothes (like gloves, socks) to prevent a sunburn.
 - › Put sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher on the areas to be treated and on all sensitive areas (like nipples, lips).

What will happen during the treatments?

- We will give you special eye protection to wear during your treatments.
- Cover your genitals with underwear or an athletic garment (jock strap).
- Cover any other areas of skin that are not being treated with clothes or towels.
- Your first treatments will be very short (from seconds to minutes long). Over time, each treatment will get longer.
- It is important to raise your treatment times slowly to prevent a burn.

What are your questions?

Please ask a member of your health care team. We are here to help you.

What will happen after the treatments?

- **After each treatment:**
 - › Wash off the psoralen ointment.
 - › Put on sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- During your treatment period, your phototherapy team and a dermatologist will check your skin to:
 - › see how you are responding to the treatments.
 - › decide if you need changes to your treatment plan.
- If you use prescribed creams, you can use them after your treatment period is done.

- **Do not tan (outdoors or in a tanning bed) during your treatment period.**
- Make sure you wear sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher every day. This is even more important on treatment days.

What are the possible risks?

- The most common risk is a skin burn.
- Less common risks include:
 - › A burn on your cornea (part of your eye)
 - › Freckles
 - › Skin aging
 - › Higher risk of skin cancers

It is important to tell your phototherapy team if you have redness, burning, or stinging that does not go away within 24 hours (1 day) of your treatment. If this happens, they will change your treatment plan.

Notes:

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

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Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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