

Dermatology - Phototherapy to Skin

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the NHS ability to provide routine elective services. We recognise that patients are waiting longer than we would all like and it is not always possible to identify when treatment will take place. This document provides you with information on how you are able to support yourself while waiting to attend the hospital. The guidance has been written by clinicians who are responsible for your care.

When you are waiting for further treatment it can sometimes feel like a long wait. The information and advice here is aimed at helping you manage that wait so you arrive for your appointment in the best possible physical and mental health.

The NHS has limited resources which means that we are unable to treat you as quickly as we would like. Each healthcare provider has to consider the type of help you need, how quickly you need treatment, the best course of action to help you and when and where you can be seen.

The process of sorting patients based on their individual needs is called prioritisation. The system of prioritisation is applied consistently across the NHS to help us to decide the order in which patients receive their treatment. This is essential to ensure that we provide care based on need. The system means that care is delivered in the fairest way possible.

Once a referral has been made from primary care to secondary care, the specialist team conduct assessments and then agree with you on the right course of action. At this stage, the urgency will be assessed. If you have a long-term health condition, for example, you may need treatment faster than someone without.

What is phototherapy?

Natural sunlight has been known to be beneficial in certain skin disorders for thousands of years. Phototherapy is a specialised treatment, delivered by the Phototherapy Unit at your hospital. It is carefully regulated to ensure patient safety and has proven to be a very effective treatment for many different skin diseases. The ultraviolet part of the radiation produced by the sun (UVR) is used in phototherapy. Although it can't be seen, UV radiation is an important part of sunlight and is divided into ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) wavelengths. UVA rays go deeper into the skin than other types of UVR and can cause the skin to tan. UVB rays do not penetrate as deeply but can cause the skin to burn. In phototherapy we use carefully calculated doses of UV light to minimise this risk.

What is UVB?

Narrowband UVB (NB-UVB) is a particular treatment where a small part of the UVB light spectrum is used to treat the skin condition. Treatment lamps produce these special rays, which has anti-inflammatory

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effects on the skin. Although these rays are also present in natural sunlight, UVB treatment is usually more effective than sunlight because harmful and ineffective sunlight rays are filtered out. In this way we also seek to minimise the risk of burning episodes.

NB-UVB has been found to be particularly useful for many different skin conditions, including psoriasis, eczema and vitiligo, and also to build up tolerance to natural ultraviolet light for people with light sensitive skin conditions. Most patients find their skin has improved after about 30 treatments and remains clear for three to four months or sometimes longer, though the number of treatment and successfulness of the treatment varies from one patient to another and from one skin disease to another.

Guidance for Patients

You and your doctor will have talked about treatment options for your skin condition, and decided that this treatment is the most suitable treatment for your skin condition. Whilst waiting for your treatment you should continue to use any ointments and creams as prescribed by your GP to manage your condition.

Further information on what to expect on your first treatment, what happens during treatment, how long treatment lasts and associated risks can be found on the British Association of Dermatologists (BAD) website using the link below.

<https://www.bad.org.uk/patient-information-leaflets/nb-uvb-phototherapy/?showmore=1&returnlink=https%3a%2f%2fwww.bad.org.uk%2fpatient-information-leaflets%3f%3d0%26q%3dPUVA%26range%3dPUVA#>

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Please contact your GP if you feel your condition is deteriorating and if they feel your appointment needs to be expedited then they will contact us.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from

Version 1: March 2022

The contents of this information has been reviewed and approved by the Medical Care Group Board of University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust

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any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

Contact Us

PA to Dr Avinash Belgi & Dr Sarita Jain
Nicki Scott: 0300 019 8148

PA to Dr Caroline Morgan & Dr Suzannah August
Sheila Parker: 0300 019 2057

PA to Dr Ian Pearson
Carrie Amey: 0300 019 5449

PA to Dr Helen Robertshaw, Dr Bonita Guha-Niyogi and Dr Liliana Luna
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