

Dermatology - Phototherapy

Introduction

Phototherapy uses natural and artificial light to treat skin conditions such as psoriasis. Artificial light therapy can be given in hospitals and some specialist centres, usually under the care of a dermatologist. These treatments are not the same as using a sunbed.

The Covid 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.

Guidance for Patients

Ultraviolet B (UVB) phototherapy

UVB phototherapy uses a wavelength of light invisible to human eyes. The light slows down the production of skin cells and is an effective treatment for some types of psoriasis that have not responded to topical treatments.

Each session only takes a few minutes, but you may need to go to hospital 2 or 3 times a week for 6 to 8 weeks.

Psoralen plus ultraviolet A (PUVA)

For this treatment, you'll first be given a tablet containing compounds called psoralens, or psoralen may be applied directly to the skin such as in a bath. This makes your skin more sensitive to light.

Your skin is then exposed to a wavelength of light called ultraviolet A (UVA). This light penetrates your skin more deeply than ultraviolet B light.

This treatment may be used if you have severe psoriasis that has not responded to other treatment.

Side effects include nausea, headaches, burning and itchiness. You may need to wear special glasses for 24 hours after taking the tablet to prevent the development of cataracts.

Long-term use of this treatment is not encouraged, as it can increase your risk of developing skin cancer.

Combination light therapy

Combining phototherapy with other treatments often increases its effectiveness. Some doctors use UVB phototherapy in combination with tablets called retinoids such as acitretin.

It is important that while you are waiting for your phototherapy you remain as active and as medically fit as possible. If you have any long-standing conditions such as high blood pressure you should get this reviewed at your GP surgery to make sure it remains well controlled. This will also help prevent any unnecessary delays when you come for your pre-operative assessment. Maintaining a well-balanced diet is also important, as is reducing any excessive weight.

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that may be impacting on your general health. If you are a current smoker it would be advisable to seek support to help with stopping, advice can be found at your local pharmacy or Doctor's surgery.

Find out your BMI

Follow this link to the [NHS BMI Calculator](#)

BMI of 25+

If you have a Body Mass Index of 25 or higher the [Better Health Let's Do This – Lose Weight](#) website provides online support to help you lose weight and includes access to the NHS 12 week weight loss plan.

The NHS 12 week fitness plan will support your weight loss plan as well as improve your health. This is aimed at beginners and will help get you into the habit of regular exercise over the course of the programme. It is structured but flexible enough to allow you to fit the exercise sessions around your other weekly commitments.

Information and advice on healthy eating and becoming more active is available from:

- [One You Eat Better \(website\)](#) - includes Easy Meals app for healthy meals and the Change4Life Food Scanner to help reduce levels of sugar in your diet
- [Better Health - Get Active \(website\)](#) - includes tips on getting active for all, including the downloadable Active 10 app, as well as tailored advice for those living with a long-term condition.

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

Urgent Health Advice

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

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.

Contact Us

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Version 1: September 2021

The contents of this information have been reviewed and approved by the Dermatology Department, Walsall Health Care Trust

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