
Are there any side effects with photodynamic therapy?

Side effects will only show in the areas being treated. After treatment, your skin may feel like it has a sunburn. Like sunburns, the pain will decrease within 24 hours. Side effects can range from mild (redness) to severe (blisters, puss, weeping and thick scabs).

The ALA cream that was applied for the treatment will cause a fluid to ooze out onto the skin's surface. It will then form a scab. The colour of the scab can range from pink to black. The scab will fall off in 7 to 10 days and the new skin underneath will be pink.

The skin's colour usually returns to normal within a few weeks to a few months depending on the area that was treated.

How should I care for my skin after photodynamic therapy?

Avoid placing the treatment area in strong and direct sunlight for 24 hours after having photodynamic therapy. If you need to go outside, cover the area with clothing.

Treat the area just as you would a sunburn. Use Glaxal Base Cream™ and aloe vera gel that is close to 100% pure. In some cases, your doctor may give you medicine (e.g., hydrocortisone) to treat your skin.

Avoid using soaps, creams and lotions on the area that has been treated.

Place an ice pack or cold cloth on the treatment area for ten minutes, at every half hour if you have swelling or pain (e.g., 10 minutes on, 20 minutes off). Ice packs should be wrapped in a lint free cloth.

Gently wash the treatment area using lukewarm water when your skin is no longer moist to the touch or it has stopped peeling. This may take several days after treatment. Pat the area dry with a soft towel.

Return to you regular washing routine once these changes no longer bother you.

How often will I get photodynamic therapy?

PDT is done at least two times. After your first treatment, you will get an appointment for the next treatment. The next treatment will be similar to the first one with a morning and afternoon session.

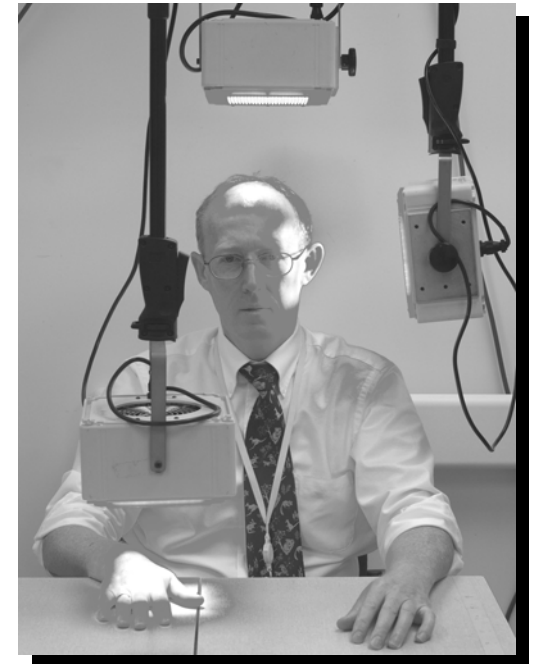
Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions or problems related to your photodynamic therapy, please contact your Radiation Therapist or Radiation Oncologist.

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Patient Information Photodynamic Therapy



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What is photodynamic therapy?

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is a treatment that uses photosensitizers. Photosensitizers are drugs that react to light. When photosensitizers are exposed to light, they produce a form of oxygen that kills nearby cells, including cancer cells.

Aminolevulinic acid (ALA) is used for this treatment. ALA is a naturally occurring amino acid that is found in most cells of the body. It is mixed with a cold cream and then put on the area of skin that will be treated. It is normal for some healthy skin tissue to be included in the treatment area.

What types of cancers and conditions are treated with PDT?

Photodynamic therapy is used to treat:

- Actinic keratosis;
- Bowens disease;
- Superficial spreading basal cell carcinomas (BCC's);
- Non-cancerous BCC's;
- Squamous cell carcinoma.

In some cases, PDT is used for treating Paget's disease and leukoplakia. PDT is very useful for controlling multiple lesions in BCCNS or Gorlins Syndrome and for people who have had a previous organ transplant.

What are the limitations of PDT?

The light needed to activate the ALA cannot pass through more than a couple of layers of skin. For this reason PDT is usually used to treat cancers and non-cancerous conditions on the surface of your skin.

How is photodynamic therapy given?

On the day of your treatment, you will have two sessions. One session will be in the morning while the other will be in the afternoon.

Your morning session will take at least one hour. Photos will be taken to better see the areas of interest. These areas will then be exposed to a blue light to better see the skin that needs treatment. More photos will be taken with the blue light on.

Once the treatment area is found, the skin in that area will be gently rubbed with gauze and water to remove any dead skin cells on the surface. This allows the ALA to better absorb into the skin. The ALA is then applied and left on your skin for at least 4 hours. You can leave or do as you like during this 4-hour period, but you must not expose the treatment area to sunlight.

The afternoon session will take at least two and a half hours. The treatment area will again be exposed to a blue light. Areas of your skin that need treatment will show up

red under the blue light. More photos will be taken and then compared to those taken at the morning session.

Next, the treatment area will be exposed to a red light. This is the light that works with the ALA to kill cancer cells on the surface of your skin. Each treatment area will be exposed to the red light for 20 to 30 minutes.

After each area has been exposed, you will get a rest period of approximately 60 minutes.

You will usually get more than one treatment with the red light, however, it will depend on how you reacted to the first treatment.

What will I feel during photodynamic therapy?

People will feel some pain or discomfort in the area being treated when the red light is on. People describe these feelings as:

- Itching;
- Stinging;
- Stretching;
- Tingling;
- Tightening;
- Throbbing..
- Burning;
- Prickling;

The amount of discomfort varies from person to person and sometimes on the part of the body being treated. These feelings usually start within one minute of exposure to the red light and stop when the light is removed. The discomfort or pain is usually not severe enough to need pain medicine.
