Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) for Your Skin

What is Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) for your skin?

This is a treatment used to help people who have skin conditions. PDT for the skin is a two-step treatment. The first step puts a drug on the skin and the second step uses a special blue light to activate the drug. Here is information about the treatment and your care after it is done.

How is this treatment done?

Step 1: Drug Treatment (Levulan® Kerastick)

- A drug called aminolevulinic acid (Levulan® Kerastick) will be put on the area of your skin being treated.
- The drug needs time to enter into the skin. You will have to wait for a period of time before the second step of the treatment can be done.
- After the drug is put on your skin, the doctor will tell you when to come back for the blue light treatment (Step 2).
- Do not wash the area where the drug was put on your skin.
- Before you have the blue light treatment (Step 2), you will need to stay out of the sun and away from bright indoor lighting. This includes bright windows, reading lamps, exam lamps like in a dentist office, and fluorescent and incandescent lighting.
- If you need to go outdoors, wear protective clothing and wide-brimmed hats to keep sunlight off the areas treated with the drug. Sunglasses should be worn to protect your eyes.
Step 2: Blue Light Treatment

- Before the blue light treatment, you will gently rinse and pat dry the treated areas on your skin.
- You will wear protective eyewear during the blue light treatment.
- The blue light treatment will take about 17 minutes.
- You may feel stinging or burning when the area on your skin is exposed to the blue light, but this should go away within a day or so.

What will I need to do after my treatment?

- Limit your time in front of a computer screen and do not watch TV for long periods of time. You should sit at least 10 feet from the TV.
- **Stay out of the sun and away from bright indoor lighting for 48 hours after your treatment.** This includes bright windows, reading lamps, exam lamps like in a dentist office, and fluorescent and incandescent lighting.
- If you need to go outside during the first 48 hours after treatment, put a thick coating of sunscreen on the treated areas. Use SPF 30 sunscreen. Neutrogena, Helioplex, Skin Ceuticals with mexoryl, Aveeno and Anthelios with mexoryl or sunscreen with zinc oxide are good choices.
- You should put sunscreen on every 2 hours and wear protective clothing and wide-brimmed hats to keep sunlight off the treated areas. Sunglasses should be worn to protect your eyes.
- Keep your skin well moisturized. Use gentle soaps and lotions like Cetaphil, Aveeno, Oil of Olay and CeraVe. Do not use products that may irritate the skin.
- You may use over-the-counter topical 0.5-1% hydrocortisone (Cortaid), 2 to 3 times a day for redness and irritation. Use for 3 to 5 days, if needed, until the redness goes away.
- You may use a cool compress for any swelling as needed.
- Vinegar and water soaks may help reduce burning and tingling.
  - Mix 1 tablespoon of white vinegar and 2 cups of cool water. Soak a washcloth in the water/vinegar mixture and put on the treated area as needed.
- You may take Tylenol or Advil for any tenderness or pain. Follow the directions on the box.
What are the side effects of this treatment?

Everyone responds differently to treatment. Most side effects will go away within 5 to 7 days. Some of the more common side effects of this treatment are:

- Peeling or flaking of the skin (this may last up to 4 weeks)
- Redness and swelling (this may last up to 4 weeks)
- Dark spots
- Stinging or burning (this lasts about 24 hours)
- Tenderness
- Oozing/leaking from the treated area

When should I call the doctor?

Call your doctor if you have any of the following:

- Severe pain
- Open, oozing/leaking skin
- Blisters
- Fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) or higher