Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) for Your Skin

What is Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) for your skin?

This is a treatment used to help people who have pre-cancer skin conditions, or actinic keratoses. PDT for your skin is a two-step treatment. 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.
- This drug needs time to absorb into your skin. This may take 30 minutes to 2 hours. Your doctor or nurse will tell you how long you will need to wait before you can come back for the blue light treatment (Step 2).
- Do not wash the area where the drug was put on your skin.
- You will need to stay out of the sun and away from bright indoor lighting. If you need to go outside, 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

- You will wear protective eyewear during the blue light treatment and your nurse will stay in the room with you.
- The blue light treatment will take 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 1 to 2 days.
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 away 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 (SPF 30 or above) on your treated areas every 2 hours. Neutrogena, Helioplex, Skin Ceuticals with mexoryl, Aveeno and Anthelios with mexoryl or other sunscreens with zinc oxide are good choices.

- It is important to wear protective clothing and wide-brimmed hats to keep sunlight off your treated areas and sunglasses 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 your skin.

- You may use over-the-counter 0.5-1% hydrocortisone (Cortaid) cream on your skin, 2 to 3 times a day for redness and irritation. You can use this for 3 to 5 days, until the redness goes away.

- You may use a cool compress for any swelling as needed.

- Vinegar and water soaks may help to reduce any burning and tingling you feel.
  
  ▶ Mix 1 tablespoon of white vinegar and 2 cups of cool water. Soak a washcloth in the water/vinegar mixture and put it on your treated area.

- 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 your skin (this may last up to 4 weeks)
- Redness and swelling (this may last up to 4 weeks)
- Dark spots
- Stinging or burning (this may last 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