

Information Handout for Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) Treatment

What is Photodynamic Therapy?

This treatment will remove sun damaged pre-cancerous spots called actinic keratosis (AK's). It may also minimize pores and reduce oil glands. The skin will become softer and smoother with the reduction of sun damaged cells.

Specifically, Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) / Blue Light Treatment Levulan (Aminolevulinic acid 20%) is a naturally occurring photosensitizing compound and has been approved by the FDA to treat precancerous skin lesions called actinic keratosis. Levulan is applied to the skin and subsequently "activated" by a specific wavelength of light.

This process of activating Levulan is termed Photodynamic Therapy. Levulan will be applied to your skin. After an incubation time determined by your provider, any pre-malignant lesions will be mechanically debrided. Debridement is the process of removing the superficial scale and crust to allow the medication to more deeply penetrate the pre-cancerous lesion. The area where Levulan was applied will then be treated with a specific wavelength of light to activate the Levulan.

You may require several treatment sessions to achieve optimal results. The recommendations, based on many studies and thousands of patients treated, are 3-4 treatments for AK's (actinic keratosis) and 2-4 treatments for acne.

Medicine is not an exact science, and that there can be no guarantees of results. While some individuals have fabulous results, it is possible that these treatments will not work for you. Alternative treatments include topical medicines, oral medications, cryosurgery, excision, and surgery.

What can I expect post-treatment?

Depending on the length of Levulan incubation and the amount of sun damage you have, you can expect to have a sunburn-like reaction that may last up to 5-7 days. Possible side effects of Levulan treatment include discomfort, burning, swelling, redness, crusting and peeling, especially in any areas of sun damaged skin and pre-cancers on the skin, as well as lightening or darkening of skin tone and spots. The peeling may last many days, and the redness for one week if you have an exuberant response to the treatment. Some patients may have an exuberant response to PDT and experience a much more severe sunburn-like effect. The greater the number of precancers on your skin the more exuberant these reactions will be. However, no matter how severe the response, there is absolutely NO possibility of scarring or permanent damage since this procedure only effects the superficial layer of the skin.

PRE-TREATMENT INSTRUCTIONS

1. On the day of treatment please come to the office with CLEAN SKIN and the treatment area free of any makeup, creams, perfumes and lotions.
2. Bring some type of physical block for the ride home such as sunglasses, a brimmed hat or scarf. If you're having your hands or arms treated you will need gloves or long sleeves. The risks of side effects (swelling, redness, peeling, crusting and discomfort) increase dramatically with ANY sun exposure, including, INDIRECT exposure in the 48 hours following treatment. Plan to cover up when leaving the office.
3. Plan to be here for a few hours. Following your treatment, you must go directly home with the treated area covered. You may consider having someone drive you and/or pick you up to allow you to apply cold compresses if you have a long ride home.
4. If you have a history of herpes outbreaks in the areas being treated, please let us know. We recommend the prescription of Valtrex (Valacyclovir) 1000mg take 1 tab by mouth each day for 3 days before treatment and continue for 3 days after treatment.
5. You will need to have:
 - A mild facial cleanser – CeraVe, Cetaphil, Eucerin
 - A high-quality sunblock; we recommend Obagi Sun Shield with SPF 50 (at least SPF 30, zinc and/or titanium dioxide >10% sunblock)
 - A good thick moisturizer – we recommend Obagi Hydrate or CeraVe, Cetaphil, Eucerin
 - Cold gel packs and refrigerated gel like Aloe Vera gel 100%
 - You may need a pain reliever such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen
 - An antibiotic ointment, Hydrocortisone or Florosone may also be needed if you get very red.
6. Be prepared for 'downtime'. You will be extremely photosensitive and will need to remain out of direct AND indirect sunlight even when you're indoors. Plan to stay inside for 48 hours. Cover your windows or cover yourself. Prepare for indoor activities. Do any shopping in advance. Avoid fluorescent lighting.
7. For the treatment of sun damage and/or AK's, generally 3 sessions of 90-minute incubation treatments are necessary; for mild damage a patient may only require 2 sessions, while severe damage may need 4.
8. For the treatment of acne, generally 2-4 are necessary. The treatment may improve the appearance of the skin and other signs of photoaging, decrease acne, reduce sebaceous hyperplasia, decrease oiliness of the skin, and improve texture/smoothness by minimizing pore size. Improvements of these skin conditions (other than actinic keratosis) are considered an "off-label" use of Levulan.

Financial: Copayments are due on the date of service, and deductible amounts will be billed to you immediately after your claim has been processed and your deductible amount has been defined. Please note any Insurance Allowed/Approved service does not mean that your insurance will pay for the entire visit. Any unpaid amounts based on your contracted deductible and copayment/coinsurance are ultimately the responsibility of the patient.

POST TREATMENT INSTRUCTIONS

What can I expect Post-Treatment?

A sunburn-like effect is normal for 2-3 days and can last for up to 5-7 days. Symptoms vary from light pink to a swollen, red and itchy sunburn with or without scaling or scabbing. Peeling or flaking may begin on day 3 or 4; Note: make sure you do not pick! Crusting may occur where there was sun damage and/or actinic keratosis. Not everybody visibly peels.

Swelling, peeling, crusting and discomfort may also occur. Remember, no matter how severe the response there is absolutely NO scarring or any permanent damage as long as you follow our directions.

1. Stay out of direct AND indirect sunlight for 48 hours. We recommend the use of Tizo Sunscreen or Obagi Sun Shield with SPF 50 (at least SPF 30 sunblock) daily. You should plan to stay indoors for 2 days and avoid sunlight through uncovered windows.
2. Keep the treated area clean so there is no risk of infection. Wash with a mild cleanser twice a day. (CeraVe, Cetaphil, Eucerin)
3. Apply a high-quality moisturizer as often as needed. (we recommend Obagi Hydrate, CeraVe, Cetaphil or Eucerin)
4. If use of a pain reliever is necessary, ibuprofen or acetaminophen are fine.
5. Keep cooling gel in refrigerator, 100% Aloe Vera gel (with solarcaine) or the plant.
6. Use ice or cold packs, frozen peas or corn if necessary, to keep down the swelling.
7. Avoid any acne regime or topical irritants such as Retin-A, glycolic or salicylic acid until your skin is no longer peeling, flaking or red.
8. If blisters form use an antibiotic ointment (Bacitracin, Polysporin) twice a day.
9. If the treated area is stinging: Using a clean washcloth, soak with 1 tablespoon white vinegar in 1 cup of cold water, then freeze the folded washcloth in a small plastic sealed bag. Soak the treatment area with the frozen washcloth for 20 minutes 4-6 times a day.
10. It is very important to apply a quality sunblock to the face daily after this treatment; we recommend Tizo Sunscreen or Obagi Sun Shield with SPF 50 (at least SPF 30 sunblock). Chemical free sunscreens like zinc or titanium dioxide are also ideal.
11. You may begin applying makeup as soon as you feel comfortable and once any crusting has peeled. Do not pick scabs.

Please call the office at 541-200-2777 if you have any questions or concerns during your recovery period or send us a message through your patient portal.