



PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY (PDT)

Your provider has indicated photodynamic therapy (PDT) as a treatment for your condition. PDT is a procedure used to treat actinic keratoses (precancerous lesions), certain types of skin cancer, and acne. The purpose of PDT is to create a chemical reaction that destroys only abnormal cells, while leaving normal cells alone. This handout will help you understand the treatment method and know what to expect before, during, and after treatment.

◆ **Before Treatment** – Before treatment, you may be treated nightly with:

Carac (fluorouracil) cream. Apply Carac cream to the entire designated treatment area before bed, starting _____ nights prior to your scheduled PDT. After using for 3 to 4 days, your skin will start to become very pink and sensitive. This medication increases sun sensitivity, so avoid sun exposure and use a minimum SPF 30, UVA/UVB sunscreen every day.

◆ **Day of Treatment** – At the office, you will be treated with aminolevulinic acid and either: blue light or red light. Your provider may also recommend that you take one or more of the following medications prior to treatment. Please note that these medications are not required for everyone.

- Ibuprofen 800 mg for pain relief (Take with food.)
- Valium (diazepam) to improve tolerance of the procedure (Do not drive yourself.)
- Valtrex (valacyclovir) or Zovirax (acyclovir) if you have a history of cold sores (herpes labialis).

*** If you need a prescription, please inform your provider prior to your PDT appointment. Medications will NOT be dispensed on the day of treatment.***

If medications have been prescribed for you, bring them with you to your scheduled PDT appointment. **Do not take any medications until instructed to do so.**

Expect to be in the office for about 2½ hours. (You may bring a book, music, snacks, etc.) Before treatment begins, the lesions may be curetted (gently scraped) to help the aminolevulinic acid penetrate the skin. After this topical medication is applied, there will be a waiting time of approximately 2 hours for the medication to absorb. You will then be exposed to either blue or red light for 15 minutes. This light exposure is the relatively uncomfortable portion of the procedure.

◆ **After Treatment** – It is advised to bring a broad-brimmed hat and protective clothing to wear when you leave the office. Your skin will be red, swollen, and very sensitive to any light for the next 2 days. Expect to look thoroughly unpresentable for about 7 to 10 days total (3 days before the procedure if using Carac, and 7 to 10 days afterward.) Some mild redness may still be present after that, but will diminish over time.

You can expect to have a reaction similar to a bad sunburn. Side effects may include burning, stinging, redness, swelling, crusting, peeling, and blistering. Your symptoms should decrease after day 5. If you have continued *increasing* pain and/or *worsening* redness, call our clinic. These may be signs of an infection.

It is recommended to avoid sunlight exposure or bright indoor light 2 days after your treatment. A minimum SPF 30, UVA/UVB, chemical-free, sensitive skin sunscreen needs to be applied prior to going outdoors during daylight hours, regardless of season or weather. Aquaphor or petroleum jelly (Vaseline) should be used 2 to 3 times per day for the first 3 to 5 days after treatment. Some optional items to help with discomfort include cold compresses and a gentle cleanser. A pain reliever (ibuprofen) may be used for the first few days, although this is typically unnecessary.

You will have a follow-up visit with your provider 4 to 6 weeks after your PDT treatment. Please call (503) 253-3910 for any questions or concerns.