



SKIN | CANCER | FOCUS

Photodynamic Therapy (PDT)

What is Photodynamic Therapy?

Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) is a treatment that uses a special light-sensitive medication and a light source to target abnormal or pre-cancerous skin cells. It is commonly used for conditions such as:

- Actinic (solar) keratoses
- Certain types of superficial skin cancers (like basal cell carcinoma)
- Some precancerous lesions

PDT works by activating the medication with light, which destroys the abnormal cells without harming surrounding healthy skin.

How Does It Work?

1. **Application of Medication:** A cream containing a light-sensitive drug (often ALA or MAL) is applied to the affected area.
2. **Incubation Period:** The cream is left on the skin for a period (usually 1–3 hours) to allow absorption into abnormal cells.
3. **Light Activation:** A special light is shone on the treated area, activating the medication to destroy abnormal cells.
4. **Healing:** Treated skin may be red, swollen, or crusted for a few days while healing occurs.

Before Treatment

- Avoid sun exposure on the area for at least 24 hours prior.
- Inform your doctor about medications or conditions that may increase light sensitivity.
- Cleanse the area as instructed; sometimes shaving may be needed.

During Treatment

- You may feel a mild stinging, burning, or tingling sensation during light exposure.
- Protective eyewear is usually provided to shield your eyes from the light.

After Treatment

- Skin may appear red, swollen, or blistered; crusting may develop over several days.

- Avoid sunlight for 48 hours after treatment (the medication makes skin highly sensitive).
- Gentle cleansing and moisturiser are recommended.
- Healing usually occurs within 1–2 weeks, depending on the area treated.

Possible Side Effects

- Redness, swelling, blistering, or crusting of the treated skin
- Temporary changes in skin pigmentation
- Mild pain or discomfort during or after treatment
- Rarely, infection or scarring

Follow-Up

- Multiple sessions may be needed for optimal results.
- Your doctor will review the treated area and determine if further treatment is necessary.
- Regular skin checks are important, especially if you have a history of skin cancer or pre-cancerous lesions.

Advantages of PDT

- Minimally invasive
- Can treat multiple lesions at once
- Preserves healthy tissue
- Minimal scarring

Important Reminders

- Avoid sun exposure before and after treatment.
 - Use sunscreen and protective clothing once healed.
 - Contact your clinic if you notice signs of infection (increased redness, pus, pain) or delayed healing.
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