

Narrowband UVB Patient Information

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What is Narrowband UVB?

Ultraviolet (UV) rays are produced by the sun. Although they can't be seen, they are an important part of sunlight and are grouped into different wavelengths: UVA, UVB and UVC. UVA rays penetrate skin and cause it to darken or tan. UVB rays are mostly absorbed by the epidermis, which is the top layer of our skin and responsible for sunburn. UVC rays are absorbed by the earth's ozone layer, so they do not reach us.

A specific wavelength of UVB (311 to 312 nanometres) is thought to be the most useful range for treating skin conditions. This is referred to as Narrowband UVB. It is given by standing in a cabinet where the whole body or specific parts of the body are exposed.

Which skin conditions is it used for?

Narrowband UVB can help various skin conditions, the most common is psoriasis, but it can also be helpful in others such as eczema and light sensitive rashes.

Why should I have Narrowband UVB treatment?

Narrowband UVB should help to improve your skin condition. It is often recommended if you have tried ointments and creams without success. However, it is sometimes used in combination with creams that are applied to the skin.

Are there any alternative treatments?

This treatment was recommended for you after consultation with your healthcare professional following both assessment of your skin and having considered other treatment options.

How is treatment given?

You will be asked to sign a consent form, which confirms that you agree to have Narrowband UVB treatment and understand what it involves.

Narrowband UVB is usually given three times weekly on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday. This is because any effects from the treatment such as pinkness, tightening and a warm feeling of the skin may take time to develop and settle down again before the next appointment. The nurse treating you will ask if you have experienced any of these symptoms at each visit so it is important that you are aware of these and report any reactions to the nurse.

To enable us to work out a suitable starting dose we carry out an MED (Minimal Erythema Dose) test. If there is insufficient clear skin then an MED test may not be possible and the starting dose will be determined by skin type and past reaction to sun exposure.

A course of treatment will vary dependent on your skin condition being treated and how you respond to the treatment.

It is important to prevent exposing the treated areas of skin to sunlight during your course of treatment.

Wearing a wide brimmed hat and applying sun block regularly will help prevent sun exposure to the face and neck.

Remember that UVB light is still present on a cloudy day. It also penetrates through window glass such as in a conservatory or car.

Possible side effects

These can be both short and long term. If you experience any side effects please let the nurse know, either as soon as possible or at the next appointment.

Short term:

Narrowband UVB can sometimes cause the skin to itch. If you are experiencing problems with itching please let the nurse know so they can advise you.

Tanning of the skin will occur.

Occasionally sunburn reactions may occur, with widespread redness and blisters.

If you are prone to cold sores Narrowband UVB can sometimes activate the virus that causes them.

If you are experiencing any side effects please let the nurse know.

Long term:

UV light causes chronic irreversible changes to the skin such as ageing and wrinkling.

Treatment is known to increase the risks of skin cancer. It is therefore important that you regularly inspect your skin and let the nurse know of any lesions that are changing or new lesions.

Important points

DO make sure you use a moisturiser regularly throughout your course of treatment. However don't apply any moisturisers, perfume, aftershave or deodorant on your skin in the two hours before receiving treatment. Some of these contain substances that make your skin more sensitive to light. This can cause patchy discolouration of the skin and take some months to fade.

DO tell the clinic staff if you start any new tablets or creams during the course of your treatment as some can make you more sensitive to light.

DO make sure you are always wearing goggles during your treatment unless advised otherwise by the nurse.

Altering the length of your hair during treatment may mean exposing previously unexposed areas of skin resulting in burning.

DON'T expose the skin to any forms of ultraviolet light during your course of treatment such as sunbathing or using a sunbed.

Please... arrive on time

attend regularly to ensure effective treatment

telephone if you are unable to attend

let the nurse know if you are concerned about any aspect of your treatment

If you have any further questions please telephone the Dermatology department on any of the numbers below:

01493 453545, 01493 453602 or 01493 453601 during the hours of 8:30 and 17:15 Monday to Friday.

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

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The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240