

This leaflet has been written to provide you with information on UVB (ultraviolet B radiation). It tells you what it is, how it is used to treat skin conditions and where you can find more information about it.

What is UVB?

UVB is a type of ultraviolet radiation which is part of natural sunlight. Ultraviolet radiation from artificial sources has been used by dermatologists as phototherapy for over a hundred years and is a widely used and effective treatment for several skin disorders. In Edinburgh we use narrowband UVB which is sometimes referred to as TL01 treatment.

Where and when is the treatment carried out?

UVB treatment is carried out in the Dermatology Day Treatment Centre on level 3 of the Lauriston Building. The telephone number is 0131 536 2063.

The unit is open Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm.

Treatment is usually given twice weekly on a Monday and Thursday or a Tuesday and Friday.

Treatment does not usually start when you first attend the clinic for assessment. Appointments are pre- arranged and a course of treatment usually lasts around 3 months.

Car parking is limited to a small number of pay and display spaces in nearby streets and a pay car park in the Quartermile.

How is UVB treatment carried out?

- The starting dose of UVB is based on your skin's reaction to sunlight. Please inform us if you are sensitive to sunlight.
- Skin conditions on your body will be treated standing in a cabinet fitted with UVB bulbs.
- Skin conditions on hands and/or feet will be treated by sitting at small units of UVB bulbs.
- All treatments are supervised by nurses and they will advise you on appropriate stance in the cabinet and positioning of your hands on the

handles or placement of hands and feet on the small units.

- You will be given protective goggles/glasses and sometimes a facial visor to wear during treatment. Patients having hands and feet treated on the small units will wear protective wrist and ankle cuffs during treatment.
- Male patients having whole body treatment must shield their genital area (a sock is ideal).
- Treatment exposure lasts a few seconds at first and builds up to several minutes during the course depending on your skin's reactions.
- The phototherapy nurses, in consultation with medical staff, will assess your progress and discuss this with you. If you have any concerns or worries please discuss these with a phototherapy nurse.
- **It is very important that you attend regularly to aid progress and minimise side effects. If you fail to attend without good reason and notice you will be discharged from phototherapy.**

What reasons might prevent you having a course of UVB?

- If you are unable to attend regularly.
- If you are unable to stand unaided for several minutes (for whole body treatments only).
- If your skin condition is made worse by natural sunlight.
- If your skin condition is too inflamed or unstable.
- If you have lupus erythematosus or xeroderma pigmentosa.
- If you have had skin cancer.

Should I use topical treatments?

Dry scaly skin reduces the effectiveness of treatment so frequent and liberal use of emollients is advised, such as 50:50 white soft paraffin: liquid paraffin, Aveeno, Oilatum, Diprobase, Doublebase or Hydromol (you may need to use up to 500g per week).

However, on UVB treatment days please do not use emollients in the 2 hours immediately before treatment unless otherwise instructed by phototherapy doctors or nurses. Yellow soft paraffin and salicylic acid block UV transmission so avoid these before UVB sessions e.g. Hydromol ointment, Epaderm cream & ointment, Vaseline, Diprosalic cream.

If you have **psoriasis**, topical treatments other than emollients are not usually used at the start of the phototherapy course but may be added from your mid-way review.

If you have **eczema** or other conditions treated with topical steroids (such as

Hydrocortisone, Eumovate, Betnovate, Synalar, Elocon) you should continue to use these until advised to gradually withdraw them. Please do not use any other creams without discussion with phototherapy staff.

Active treatments should not be on your skin when you attend for each UVB session e.g. Dovonex, Silkis, Exorex and steroids.

Do I need to avoid anything during a course of UVB?

- Make-up, foundation (before whole body UV sessions only).
- Perfumed or SPF (sun protection factor)-containing products & pain-relief skin gels before each UV session.
- Wearing certain items of jewellery during treatment sessions - a phototherapy nurse will discuss this with you prior to starting a course of UVB.
- Fake tan - the effects on ultraviolet treatment are unknown and it can cause difficulties assessing your skin.
- Sun exposure and sunbeds.
- Severe haircuts (for whole body treatments only) – this could result in burning of skin previously covered by your hair.
- Excessive quantities of celery, parsnip, citrus fruits, carrots, parsley and figs - they may make you more sensitive to the ultraviolet light.
- Starting new medications or skin preparations without informing a phototherapy nurse – some can make your skin more sensitive to UVB including some which can be bought e.g. antihistamines, ibuprofen (by mouth and skin gel) and St John's Wort.

Are there any side effects of UVB treatment?

During a course of UVB:

- Burning of the skin occasionally occurs and is usually maximal at 12-24 hours. Around two thirds of patients experience mild discomfort and/or pink warm skin for more than a day at some point during a course of UVB.
- **If painful redness (with or without blisters) occurs you must contact the phototherapy department as soon as possible and you will be asked to attend for assessment and treatment.**
- Your skin condition may worsen.
- Itching and dryness may occur (frequent and liberal use of emollients can reduce this).
- Cold sores – if you are prone to these they may occur during UVB treatment.
- Rashes – if you are prone to developing a sunlight-induced rash such as polymorphic light eruption this may occur during UVB treatment.

Long term:

- Narrowband UVB has only been used widely in the last 20 years therefore information on long term safety is not available. We think it is possible that this treatment may result in a small increase in skin cancer risk if treatment courses are given repeatedly over a number of years (if you have had more than 500 treatments with UVB you will be offered annual skin cancer surveillance).

Where can I find out more about UVB?

Further patient information on UVB is available online in the patient information sections:

British Association of Dermatologists: www.bad.org.uk

Photonet (National Managed Clinical Network for Phototherapy):
www.photonet.scot.nhs.uk