

North Metro Dermatology

Photodynamic Therapy Instructions (aka “Blue Light” or “PDT”) for precancerous skin lesions

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) treats precancerous growths by using a photosensitizing agent called aminolevulinic acid (also known as Levulan® or Ameluz®, followed by blue light (part visible spectrum).

Before your treatment:

- Be sure to tell your dermatologist if you have a history of cold sores. You may need to pre-medicate prior to your treatment.
- Notify your dermatologist of all prescription and OTC medications you are taking as some medications may cause photosensitivity.
- Plan to avoid sunlight and artificial forms of light for 48 hours following treatment.
- If instructed, follow specific skin prepping guidelines for indicated time frame.
- Plan for approximately a 45-minute visit.
- Bring a hat or other sun protective clothing to your treatment for use immediately following treatment.

What to expect during treatment:

- Treatment area will be cleansed, and then aminolevulinic acid will be applied. At times, certain “thicker” precancerous skin lesions may be curetted (or scraped) prior to application of aminolevulinic acid for better absorption of the topical medication, if deemed necessary by the provider.
- In most cases, you will not feel anything when the aminolevulinic acid is applied, though some report slight stinging.
- Next, the blue light unit will be positioned over the area to be treated and the light will be turned on. You will wear a set of safety goggles to protect your eyes from the light.
- Total light exposure time is 30 minutes. It is not uncommon to experience slight stinging and/or burning.
- When the light treatment has been completed a zinc-based sunscreen with moisturizer will be applied.

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- YOU MUST COVER THE AREA WHEN LEAVING THE CLINIC AND FOR THE NEXT 48 HOURS FOLLOWING. REMEMBER TO WEAR LONG SLEEVES OR A WIDE BRIMMED HAT FOR PROTECTION OF YOUR TREATMENT AREA.

After your treatment:

- Plan for your skin to look and feel like a sunburn for up to 48 hours after treatment. Common side effects include redness, swelling, stinging, dryness, and itching. Peeling is also common which can begin 24 hours after treatment. Side effects usually subside within one week, though can take up to four weeks to resolve.
- Avoid all sunlight and artificial light exposure as much as possible for 48 hours following treatment (this includes sitting close to TV and computer).

- Continue to wear protective clothing to cover the treatment area.
- Wear sunscreen with SPF rating of 30 or higher that contains at least 5% zinc oxide until skin is well healed. We recommend EltaMD or NMD sunscreen (available for purchase at our clinic) or other sunscreens containing the appropriate SPF and zinc oxide level (available at most drugstores).
- Apply moisturizer as often as needed to prevent and relieve dryness. We recommend Skin Wise Organics Soothing Barrier Ointment (available for purchase at our clinic).
- Gently cleanse skin twice daily with water and gentle soap (i.e. unscented Dove, Vanicream, Cetaphil, Skin Wise Organics Gentle Cream Cleanser or EltaMD Dermal Wound Cleanser*).
- Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen can be used to relieve discomfort and inflammation.
- Plan for a follow up visit approximately 4-6 weeks following the treatment.

*This product is classified as an eligible expense by most HAS, HRA, and FSA plans. Check with your plan's administrator to confirm qualifying expenses, as well as any supporting documents that may be needed to substantiate your claim.

Please contact our office if you have any questions or concerns.

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