

North Metro Dermatology

Photodynamic Therapy Preparation (aka "Blue Light" or "PDT") for non-melanoma skin cancer

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 a 90-120 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.
- Plastic wrap may be applied to the scalp, arms, or hands to allow the aminolevulinic acid to work more effectively. The aminolevulinic acid will incubate and remain on the skin for 60-120 minutes. In most cases, you will not feel anything though some report a bit of stinging.
- Once your incubation time is complete, a Physician Assistant or Medical Assistant will cleanse the skin with soap and water, removing excess medication. Then 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 4 minutes. It is not uncommon to experience stinging and/or burning. Treatment can be stopped at any time if it is

determined the treatment is too uncomfortable, however, most people are able to tolerate the procedure.

- When the light treatment has been completed a topical ointment will be applied to the affected area.
- 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.
- Gently cleanse skin twice daily with water and gentle soap (i.e. unscented Dove, Vanicream, Cetaphil, Skin Wise Clinical Gentle Renewing Cleanser or EltaMD® Dermal Wound Cleanser*).
- A topical ointment should be applied daily to the affected area to prevent and relieve dryness as well as assist in healing. We recommended a neutral ointment, such as EltaMD® Moisture Seal, Vaseline or Aquaphor, which can be purchased at most drugstores.
- 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 "first aid care" product is classified as an eligible expense by most HSA, 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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