



## PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY (PDT)

### WHAT IS PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY?

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is a treatment performed in the dermatology clinic that uses a special topical medication in combination with blue light. The medication is called Levulan® (5-aminolevulinic acid or ALA), and the blue light activates the medication when shined on the skin. PDT is used to treat several skin conditions, most commonly actinic keratoses or pre-cancerous sun spots.

### WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF PDT?

PDT can be used to treat numerous actinic keratoses in one session, and thus can be a more efficient treatment than liquid nitrogen cryotherapy (freezing) or cream treatments such as 5-fluorouracil (Efudex® or Carac®) and imiquimod (Aldara®). The cosmetic outcome is very good following PDT, with most people recovering from the treatment in about 1 week.

### WHAT BODY AREAS CAN BE TREATED?

PDT using the blue light system can treat the face and scalp in one session. The upper body, arms, and legs may also be treated in separate sessions.

### HOW MANY TREATMENTS DOES IT TAKE TO SEE RESULTS?

Most people will notice significant improvement (fewer actinic keratoses) after 1 session. A series of treatments several weeks apart may be needed in some instances to achieve maximal improvement.

### WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES AND SIDE EFFECTS OF PDT?

The topical medication, Levulan®, causes sensitivity to the sun and bright indoor light for 48 hours. During this time, the skin in the treated area must be strictly protected from direct sun exposure, sunlight through windows, and bright indoor lights including exam room lights, bright reading lights, and tanning bed lights. Avoidance of these light sources and protective clothing (hat, scarf, tightly woven clothing) along with use of zinc oxide sunscreen is required for 48 hours after the treatment.

Stinging, itching, and tingling of the skin are common noticed during the treatment. This is rarely severe enough to need to stop the treatment. The breeze from a fan helps reduce these symptoms. Redness and swelling of the skin, similar to a sunburn, is expected to occur after the treatment. Crusting of the skin may occur as well, and this is treated with a moisturizer. Some lightening or darkening of the skin in the treated area may occur, and this is temporary and resolves as the skin heals.

### WHAT ARE THE STEPS OF THE TREATMENT?

1. Make sure your skin is clean and free of makeup, moisturizer, and sunscreen. Bring a broad-brimmed hat to the treatment session.
2. The consent form for treatment is signed, and photographs may be taken.
3. The skin is washed with soap and water.
4. An acetone scrub is used to remove oil from the skin surface.
5. Levulan®, a liquid, is applied to the skin in the area to be treated.
6. The Levulan® is left on the skin for 60 minutes in order to be absorbed by the actinic keratoses.
7. The Levulan® is activated by the blue light system for 16 minutes, 40 seconds. Protective goggles are worn.
8. The skin is rinsed with water and sunscreen is applied.
9. Post-treatment skin care instructions are given to you.

I have read the above information. All of my questions have been answered and I fully understand my responsibilities pertaining to my treatment.