dermatology associates

Photodynamic Therapy (PDT)

To schedule your appointment for PDT please call Carissa at 503-946-6253

Day of Treatment

- Please come to your appointment with a freshly cleansed face. Remove all sunscreen, moisturizers, lotion, and make-up.
- Eat a normal breakfast and take your routine medications.
- To protect the treated area from sun or other bright light afterwards, bring cover-up clothing. These may include: a broad brimmed hat, bandana or scarf, long-sleeved shirt, and/or gloves.
- Bring a book or magazine to read. You will be waiting 2 hours while the ALA is absorbed into your skin. You may leave to run errands or go home as long as you return within the appointed time.
- During the treatment, you will experience mild to moderate discomfort. We will provide you with methods to decrease your discomfort.

After the Treatment

- Go straight home and stay indoors. Do not stop to run errands.
- You must remain indoors and avoid light exposure for 40 hours after treatment. Avoid direct sunlight through windows. You may go outside after complete sunset.
- If you have any discomfort, begin applying ice pack to the treated areas. You may apply ice packs for 15 minutes every hour.
- Swelling will be most evident around the eyes and mouth, and is usually more prominent in the morning.
- Take pain medications such as Advil, Motrin, Ibuprofen or Tylenol as needed.

Days 2-7

- Your skin will feel dry and tight and may even have some crusting. Apply moisturizers frequently.
- Try to avoid direct sunlight for one week. Use a total zinc oxide or titanium dioxide based sunscreen with a minimum SPF 30.
- Wear a hat or protective clothing over the treated areas.

PDT Patient Guide

What is photodynamic therapy?

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is a special treatment performed with a topical photosensitizing agent called levulan 5-aminolevulinic acid (ALA), activated with the correct wave length of light. This is also known as ALA-PDT treatment. These treatments remove sun-damaged precancerous areas and spots called actinic keratoses. Sun damage, fine lines and blotchy pigmentation are also improved because of the positive effect of levulan and the light treatment.

How many treatments will it take to see the "best results"?

To achieve maximum improvement of precancerous (actinic keratoses) sun damage, skin tone and texture, a series of 1-2 treatments, 2-6 months apart is usually most effective. Many patients with actinic keratoses are happy with one treatment. More treatments can be done at periodic intervals in the future to maintain the rejuvenated appearance of the skin.

What are the disadvantages?

Following PDT, the treated areas can appear red with some peeling and crusting for 7-10 days. Some patients have an exuberant response to PDT and experience marked redness of their skin. Temporary swelling of the lips and around the eyes can occur for a few days. Darker pigmented patches can become temporarily darker and then peel off leaving normal skin (this usually occurs over 7-10 days). Repeat treatments may be necessary.

What are the advantages?

- Redness and crusting after PDT typically lasts 7-10 days as compared to 4-6 weeks with topical Efudex or Aldara treatment.
- Reduced scarring and improved cosmetic outcome compared with liquid nitrogen, surgery, or Efudex.
- Levulan improves the whole facial area treated, creating one color, texture and tone, rather than just spot treating with liquid nitrogen, cautery or surgery.

What is an Actinic Keratosis?
An actinic keratosis is a scaly or crusty lesion that forms on the skin surface. They range in size from a small pinhead spot to over an inch across. They may be light or dark, tan, pink, red, a combination of these, or the same color as your skin.

Why an Actinic Keratosis can be dangerous?
Actinic keratoses can be the first step in the development of skin cancer, and, therefore, is a precursor of cancer or a "precancer". It is estimated that 10 to 15 percent of active lesions, which are redder and more tender than the rest, will take the next step and progress to a skin cancer called Squamous cell carcinoma. The most aggressive form of keratoses, actinic cheilitis, appears on the lips and can evolve into squamous cell carcinoma.