

PHOTOTHERAPY (NARROWBAND)

Why Phototherapy?

There is a group of skin disorders that are called “photoresponsive”. This means they generally will have a beneficial effect from exposure to ultraviolet light. Phototherapy is usually indicated when topical treatments do not yield the desired response but in some cases it may be the first-line treatment of choice. Ultraviolet light is used to inhibit the rapid growth of skin cells for psoriasis or to redirect the behavior of skin cells in other skin disorders.

UVB

The standard form of UVB is also known as “broad band UVB” indicating that the light rays cover a broad band (large selection) of the ultraviolet light spectrum (290-320 nanometers). This form of light acts in a similar fashion to natural sunlight. It can cause a sunburn if over used. In the supervised therapy at our center, a sunburn (erythema) is not a goal but a very SLIGHT sunburn can occasionally happen and is not a cause for concern. UVB is a powerful form of ultraviolet that requires a relatively small dose given in millijoules.

Patients on standard UVB will usually be treated three times a week initially (the clearing phase) for an average of six to twelve weeks and then have maintenance as long as medically needed. For some this is a very short time and others required extended maintenance which is usually once a week. This form of therapy has been in use since the 1930’s.

<http://www.natbiocorp.com/clinical-research.htm>

PUVA

This is a combination therapy that requires the ingestion of medication to assist with the absorption of UVA type of ultraviolet light. PUVA is an acronym standing for P= psoralen (the drug) and UVA= the type of light. UVA is known as “long wave” ultraviolet light (320-400 nanometers) UVA rays penetrate deeper into the skin than UVB and are the “tanning rays”. UVA is considered to be significantly less powerful than UVB and, therefore, is given in a larger dosing unit called a “joule”.

Patients on PUVA will usually be treated two times a week initially. An 80 to 90% improvement is expected over a 10-13 week period. PUVA maintenance can be stretched out to once a month in many cases because the skin maintains its conditioning for a longer time than it does with UVB. There are some limitations in the patient selection for this treatment and for the overall number of treatments that may be allowed per individual.

Prior to initiating PUVA treatments patients are required to have some lab tests and an eye examination by an ophthalmologist.

This form of therapy has been in use since 1974.