

## **PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY (PDT) PATIENT GUIDE**

### **WHAT IS PHOTODYNAMIC ?**

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is a special treatment performed with a topical photosensitizing agent called Levulan (5 aminolevulinic acid or ALA) activated with the correct wavelength of light. This is also known as “ALA/PDT treatment.” These treatments remove sun damaged pre-cancerous zones called actinic keratosis. Sun damage, fine lines, and blotchy pigmentation are also improved because of the positive effect of Levulan and the light treatment. ALA/PDT treatment also has the unique ability to minimize pores and reduce oil glands, effectively treating stubborn acne vulgaris, acne rosacea, and improve the appearance of some acne scars.

### **HOW MUCH IMPROVEMENT CAN I EXPECT ?**

Patients with severe sun damaged skin manifested by actinic keratosis, texture, and tone changes including mottled pigmentation and skin laxity may see excellent results. You may also see improvement of large pores and pitted acne scars. Active acne can improve dramatically.

### **HOW MANY TREATMENTS WITH IT TAKE TO SEE THE “BEST RESULTS” ?**

To achieve maximum of pre-cancerous (actinic keratosis) sun damage, skin tone and texture, a series of three treatments three to five weeks apart is most effective. (Some patients with just actinic keratosis are happy with one treatment.)

### **WHAT ARE THE DISADVANTAGES?**

Following PDT, the treated areas can appear red with some peeling for 2-7 days. Temporary swelling of the lips and around your eyes can occur for a few days.

Darker pigmented patches called liver spots can become temporarily darker and peel of leaving normal skin. (This usually occurs over seven to ten days.) Repeat treatments may be necessary as medicine is not an exact science.

### **WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES ?**

1. EASIER for patients than repeated topical liquid nitrogen, Efudex (5FU), or Aldara because the side effects are minimal, rapid healing, and only 1 to 3 treatments are required.
2. The ALA/PDT treatment at our clinic is PAINLESS verses liquid nitrogen, 5-FU and Aldara.
3. REDUCED SCARRING and improved cosmetic outcome compared with cautery, surgery and Efudex. Liquid nitrogen can leave white spots on your skin.
4. Levulan IMPROVES THE WHOLE AREA TREATED creating one color, texture, and tone rather than just spot treating with liquid nitrogen, cautery and surgery.

In summary, PDT matches the “Ideal Treatment” for actinic damage.

- Well tolerated (essentially painless)
- Easily performed by a specialty clinic environment
- Non-invasive (no needles or surgery required)
- Excellent cosmetic outcome (particularly in cosmetic sensitive areas of the face)
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### **TREATMENT STEPS**

1. Patients who have a history of recurring cold sores should start oral Valtrex 500mg tablets, two tablets twice daily for three days – starting this prescription the morning of your PDT treatment. The prescription for this product will be ordered for you.

2. Make sure your skin is clean and free of all make-up, moisturizers, and sunscreens. Bring a hat, sunglasses, and scarf when appropriate to the clinic.
3. Photography will be done by the staff before the Levulan is applied.
4. You must sign a consent form.
5. An acetone scrub is performed. This will enhance the absorption of the Levulan and give much more even uptake.
6. Levulan is applied topically to the whole area to be treated.
7. The Levulan is left on for 7 to 30 minutes before any light treatment.
8. The Levulan is activated with the BLU-U. This unique spectrum of light activates the Levulan beginning with the low energy levels. This is painless and requires about 8 minutes to complete.
9. Post-treatment instructions will be given to you to care for your improved skin.

## **HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR PATIENTS FOLLOWING PHOTODYNAMIC SKIN REJUVENATION**

### **DAY OF TREATMENT**

1. Remain indoors if possible and avoid direct sunlight.
2. Take analgesics such as Tylenol or Advil if necessary.
3. Apply hydrocortisone 1% ointment, Vaseline ointment at night. Your skin will feel dry; keep it moisturized.

### **DAY 2**

1. You may take a shower. Men should probably not shave if their face was treated.
2. You may take analgesics. Any discomfort usually subsides by Day 3.

3. You should avoid sunlight and try to remain indoors on Day 2. The photosensitivity to sunlight is usually gone 24 hours after treatment, but may last as long as 40 hours.
4. You should soak the treated areas with a solution of ½ tsp. skim milk and water compress for 20 minutes every 4-6 hours. The area should be patted dry and Hydrocortisone 1% ointment reapplied following the milk and water compresses.

### **DAY 3-7**

1. You may begin applying make-up once any crusting has healed. The area may be slightly red for a few weeks.
2. The skin will feel dry and tightened. A good moisturizer should be used daily.
3. Try to avoid direct sunlight for one week. No beaches!! Use a sunscreen with a minimum SPF 30 for four months. Total Block SPF 50 (available in our office) is especially effective to protect your newly rejuvenated skin.