

About Photodynamic Therapy

Photorejuvenation using intense pulsed light (IPL) is the gold standard of non-ablative skin treatments. One of the most recent advances in photorejuvenation is photodynamic therapy combined with IPL and/or a blue light, known as photodynamic skin rejuvenation.

Photodynamic Therapy involves the use of a photosensitizing agent called Levulan (5-aminolevulinic acid or ALA). This agent is applied to your skin and activated with and IPL and/or Blue Light. This therapy treats precancerous lesions (Actinic Keratoses) and may provide significant improvement in sun-damaged skin, fine lines, and mottled pigmentation. Additionally, it improves pore size, skin texture and tautness, rosacea, sebaceous hyperplasia, and certain kinds of acne. It also reduces oil glands.

2 – 3 Photodynamic Therapy sessions will usually produce the same results as 5 IPL treatments, with the exception that Photodynamic Therapy also treats pre-cancerous lesions and some forms of acne.

What To Expect During Photodynamic Therapy

A clinician will prepare your skin and then apply Levulan to your skin. The Levulan is left on your skin for an incubation period which may vary from person to person, but usually it is on your skin for 1 – 2 hours. The Levulan is then activated with an IPL and/or a Blue Light. This can take anywhere from approximately 17 minutes to about 30 minutes. During the treatment you may feel stinging, tingling, prickling or burning of the lesions, but this will go away after treatment. Your skin will be cleaned and a moisturizer and sunscreen applied.

Side Effects of Photodynamic Therapy: Following photodynamic therapy, the treated areas will turn red and swollen for approximately 3 – 7 days. Sometimes temporary swelling of the lips and around the eyes can occur for a few days. Darker pigmented spots will become darker for a period of 7 – 10 days and will then come off. You will peel. Some crusting may be noted. There will be some discomfort, but no significant pain. Repeat treatments are usually necessary for optimal results.

Pre-Treatment Care: Avoid direct sun exposure prior to Photodynamic Therapy. Treatment cannot be performed on tanned skin. When sun exposure is limited, the risk of complications is greatly reduced.

Post Treatment Care: Cover your face with a hat, scarf and sunglasses for the drive home. It is extremely important to protect your skin from the sun and bright light for 48 hours after Photodynamic Therapy. Any light during this period of time can reactivate the Levulan. Failure to adequately protect your skin for 48 hours will result in a severe sunburn with blistering and scabbing. Keep the skin clean and moist. Use sunscreen during day light hours. Ice packs will relieve discomfort and reduce swelling. Sleep with your head elevated. With Photodynamic Therapy, most of the skin will return to normal in about 1 week. Trouble spots and pre-cancerous lesions may take longer to heal.

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