

# Photodynamic Therapy Treatment



cancer centre  
london

[cancercentrelondon.co.uk](http://cancercentrelondon.co.uk)

Part of Aspen Healthcare [www.aspen-healthcare.co.uk](http://www.aspen-healthcare.co.uk)

# What is Photodynamic Therapy Treatment?

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is a technique for treating skin cancers and sun-damaged skin which could turn cancerous if left untreated. Photodynamic treatment involves the use of photochemical reactions created through the interaction of photosensitising agents (which by itself is harmless), light, and oxygen for the treatment of malignant or benign skin diseases.

This interaction causes changes in the sun-damaged skin cell, which leads to cell death. The area of skin exposed to the light source will be affected and inflamed. Once the inflammation clears, normal cells recover whereas damaged cells do not.

At the Cancer Centre London we use Metvix cream as the photosensitising agent and the Aktelite Red light as the light source. The clinic's treatment equipment is supplied and supported by Galderma.

## **WHAT SKIN CONDITIONS ARE TREATED WITH PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY?**

PDT can be used to treat various skin conditions including:

- Superficial or 'thin' **Basal Cell Carcinoma**
- **Bowens Disease** – a pre-cancer to squamous cell carcinoma
- **Aktinic (Solar) Keratosis** – early sun-damage, a pre-cancer

If a biopsy has been done and it has indicated one of the above conditions you could be referred for Photodynamic therapy.

## **WHO IS NOT SUITABLE FOR PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY TREATMENT?**

- PDT is not recommended if you are pregnant
- The PDT cream contains peanut oil; so tell your doctor and radiographer if you are allergic to peanuts, nuts and soya
- PDT is not recommended if you have porphyria (a light-sensitive disorder, where the patient is producing the same photosensitiser used in PDT which is present in the blood, skin and other tissues of the body)

# The treatment procedure

PDT is an outpatient procedure, and will be performed by a radiographer who specialises in treating skin conditions. Depending on the diagnosis two PDT treatments will be administered exactly one week apart. The treatment itself is a 2-step procedure and it takes several hours to complete. The first step is to apply a cream containing the photosensitiser (Metvix) to the area that needs to be treated. If necessary, any loose scale or crusts on the lesion will first be removed. (If the lesion has a thick scab over it, it may be helpful to moisturise in order to soften until the day prior to your treatment.) A dressing will then be applied over the cream and you will be asked to return in 3 hours. This wait is to allow the photosensitiser to be absorbed and to be converted into the active chemical by the skin.

The second step involves the cream being wiped off and the area cleaned. The light from the Aktelite source is then shone onto the treatment area for approximately 8 minutes (the precise time will be determined by your radiographer). After the treatment has been completed, a dressing needs to be applied for a minimum of 2 days, to prevent any further exposure to light.

## **POST TREATMENT AND AFTERCARE**

Your treatment radiographer will explain how you should care for the treated areas. It is usually suggested that the dressing should be kept in place for 48hrs and once removed you can wash, bathe, or shower as usual. Do not rub the treated area, but gently pat it dry.

Within a few days, a scab will form, and healing will take several weeks (depending on which part of the body has been treated). Care must be taken not to scratch the area or accidentally dislodge the scab during the healing process. The use of a suitable sunscreen (SPF 30) following the procedure, especially during outdoor activities, is important. You will be seen by your dermatologist for a follow up consultation, 3-4 months post treatment.

Research has shown that Photodynamic Therapy remains the treatment with the best possible cosmetic results for skin lesions.

## **THE SHORT-TERM SIDE EFFECTS OF PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY INCLUDE:**

- **Pain** When the red light is shone onto the skin, the treated area may tingle and burn. If it is too uncomfortable, the radiographer may suggest pausing treatment for a while, or a cool water spray and fan may be used. After completion of treatment, inflammation and itching may last for a few days, and may require painkillers.
- **Inflammation** The treated area may initially become pink and puffy, and may ooze a little: this is a normal reaction. It settles within a few days.
- **Blistering and ulceration** The treated area may occasionally blister or ulcerate. This is very rare.
- **Infection** If the treated area becomes red, swollen and painful, an infection may have developed, and you should contact your doctor.

## **POTENTIAL LONG-TERM SIDE EFFECTS OF PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY INCLUDE:**

- **Colour change** The skin may be left darker or paler after PDT.
- Treatment may not always be effective, or the condition may re-occur. If this happens, you may be offered further PDT, or an alternative type of treatment may be recommended.

We would also like to inform you that we also have a skins/superficial unit (Gulmay/Xstrahl) on site. We treat various benign (Dupuytren's Contracture, Keloid) and malignant skin (Basal Cell Carcinoma, Squamous cell carcinoma) conditions on this radiotherapy treatment machine.

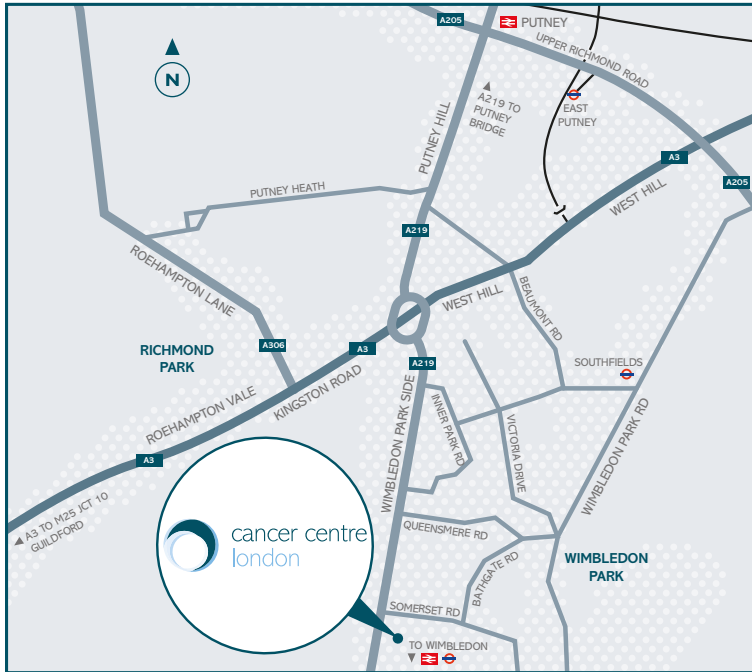
## THE REFERRAL & BOOKING PROCESS:

At the Cancer Centre London you have to be referred by your Dermatologist or Plastic surgeon once a confirmed diagnosis is made and your suitability for this treatment is established. We do not have a waiting list and can often work around your schedule for appointments. Once referred your treatment radiographer will contact you to make the appointments and answer any further questions you may have.

## Top sun safety tips






- **Protect the skin** with clothing, including a hat, t-shirt and UV protective sunglasses.
- **Seek shade** between 11am and 3pm, when it's sunny.
- **Use a sunscreen** of at least SPF 30, which also has high UVA protection (DIAMOND RATING).
- Keep **babies and young children** out of direct sunlight.
- The British Association of Dermatologists recommends that you **tell your doctor about any changes to a mole** – if your GP is concerned about your skin, make sure you see a Consultant Dermatologist. Your GP can refer you.

# How to find us



49 Parkside, Wimbledon  
London, SW19 5NB  
Tel: 0208 247 3351  
info@cancercentrelondon.co.uk

[cancercentrelondon.co.uk](http://cancercentrelondon.co.uk)

-  **By Tube:** Tube stations at East Putney, Southfields or Wimbledon (all District Line), plus a short taxi journey.
-  **By Bus:** Route 93 runs between Putney Bridge and North Cheam via Wimbledon Station, and stops outside Parkside Hospital.
-  **By Tram:** Tram terminal from Croydon to Wimbledon Station.
-  **By Car:** Situated close to Putney and Wandsworth Bridge to the north and easily accessible from the M25 and A3.
-  **By Train:** Mainline railway stations at Wimbledon or Putney.

## Contact Details

Cancer Centre London  
Radiotherapy ..... 0208 247 3431

Outpatients ..... 0208 971 8026  
Parkside Hospital (Dermatology appointments)