

Photodynamic Therapy Description

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is an FDA approved treatment for actinic keratosis (AKs).

What are actinic keratoses (AKs)?

AKs are precancerous spots caused by sun exposure – usually exposure many years ago. AKs may develop into squamous cell carcinoma (a common skin cancer). PDT is used when there are multiple AKs that need to be treated in an area. PDT is an in-office, two step treatment. In the first step we apply a medication (aminolevulinic acid) to your skin. In the second step we use a special blue light to activate the medication. This medication is preferentially taken up by the precancerous cells and is converted to a substance that is activated by the blue light. When the blue light is turned on, it will destroy the precancerous cells that have taken up the medication. The purpose of this treatment is to reduce the amount of AKs on your skin and hopefully reduce your risk of skin cancer.

Treatment:

- **Step 1: Medication Application.** A medication called aminolevulinic acid (Levulan Kerastick) will be applied to the area of your skin to be treated. This medication needs time to be absorbed by the actinic keratosis. You will have to wait for a period of time (usually 1.5–2 hours but can be as long as overnight) before the second step of the treatment can be done. We recommend that during this time you remain in the waiting room unless it is an overnight incubation (infrequent). Bring some reading material or anything else you might like to keep you entertained during your wait. Do not wash the area where the medication was put on your skin. During this waiting period you will need to stay out of the sun and away from bright indoor lighting. If you need to go outdoors during this time, wear protective clothing and a wide brimmed hat to keep sunlight off the area treated with the medication. Sunglasses should be worn to protect your eyes.
- **Step 2: Blue Light Treatment.** You will wear protective eyewear, which we will provide, during the blue light treatment. Your skin will then be exposed to a bright blue light. The blue light treatment will take about 17 minutes. You will feel stinging or burning when the area on your skin is exposed to the blue light. The most intense part of the treatment is the first 5 minutes, after which the intensity usually subsides for the duration of the treatment.

Before your treatment:

If you have a history of cold sores, please inform us in advance, as you may want to take an oral antiviral medication before and after your treatment.

Insurance Coverage:

PDT is generally covered by most insurance companies. If you have questions regarding your specific insurance coverage, please contact your insurer. Information you will need if you call:

CPT code (procedure code): 96567

J-Code (medication code): J7308

ICD-10 code (diagnosis code): L57.0

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