

## Narrowband UVB Phototherapy

### *What to expect and possible risks*

*This handout explains what to expect and the possible risks when having phototherapy (light treatments) with narrowband UVB (nb-UVB) light.*

### What is narrowband UVB phototherapy?

*Phototherapy* means “treatment with light.” UVB stands for *ultraviolet B* light. UVB is a natural light found in sunlight. It is helpful in treating skin diseases. *Narrowband ultraviolet B* (nb-UVB) treatment uses a special machine that emits **only** UVB light.

### What to Expect

- You will discuss this treatment option with your dermatology provider before starting phototherapy. Your dermatology provider will review the risks and possible benefit of this treatment with you.
- It may take 8-10 weeks to notice improvement with phototherapy. Most people continue treatments for many months.
- Some patients are able to transition to treatment with home phototherapy. Making the decision to switch to home phototherapy should be done after talking with your dermatology provider. They will consider what is best for your skin condition, how your skin has responded to phototherapy so far, insurance coverage and any harmful effects from the medical device.
- Before each session, your phototherapy nurse will ask:
  - Have you had any reactions to your previous phototherapy treatments?
  - Are you taking any new medicines? Medicines can change your sensitivity to the light treatments. You must tell your nurse about all new medicines you are taking before each phototherapy session.



*The Phototherapy Unit at University of Washington Medical Center.*

## Personal Items

We may ask that you keep a long-sleeved shirt or other clothing used for each session at the Dermatology Center.

When you are done with treatment, or you stop having sessions for 2 months or more, you must take home all personal items you have left here.

Dermatology staff may dispose of the items without notice if you do not collect them within 2 months of your last treatment.

## Short-term Risks

- After phototherapy, you can expect tanning, mild redness, and dryness in your skin.
- If you have any of these symptoms, call the phototherapy nurse:
  - Redness that lasts more than 24 hours
  - Blistering
  - Skin pain
  - Fever and chills

## Long-term Risks

Long term treatment is appropriate for many people. The following risks are possible with long term treatment.

- *Eye damage:* Too much ultraviolet (UV) light can damage eyes. We provide protective eyewear that you must wear during all sessions.
- *Photo aging:* Repeated and prolonged exposure to UV light can cause early aging of the skin, including wrinkling and color changes.
- *Skin cancer:* Although the risk is low, there is an increase in skin cancer linked with UV exposure. Men who are treated with phototherapy may have an increased risk of skin cancer of the genitals. We provide a protective covering that men must place over their genitals during their phototherapy sessions.

## Before Your Treatment

Before you have phototherapy treatments, please be sure that you agree with these statements:

- I discussed the risks and benefits of this treatment with my provider and agree to treatment.
- I understand that having phototherapy narrow band UVB (nb-UVB) therapy carries some risks. I have received information from my healthcare provider about these risks.
- I will report any new medicine or unusual skin changes to the phototherapy nurse.
- I will visit the Dermatology Center for a yearly skin exam after I complete my phototherapy treatments.
- I understand that Dermatology staff may dispose of any personal items I left in the unit if it has been more than 2 months since my last treatment.

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Dermatology Center:  
206.598.4067 (press 8 when  
you hear the recording)