



Photodynamic Therapy (PDT): Blue Light

FAQs

How does “Blue Light” work?

In our office, a medication called Levulan is applied to the area of sun damage that has been evaluated and diagnosed by one of our dermatologic health care providers. The medication is absorbed by the damaged cells after a prescribed “incubation” period. The area is then exposed to the Blue Light for 16 minutes and 40 seconds, which causes a chemical reaction destroying only the damaged cells. After the damaged cells are destroyed, healthy new cells will replace them.

What happens after a “Blue Light” treatment?

The Levulan medication that was applied to your skin before exposure to the Blue Light remains active for 48 hours after the initial application. Any exposure to sunlight (even through a window) will cause inflammation and irritation. For this reason, strict sun avoidance is urged for two days following the procedure. This means no participation in any outdoor activities such as golf, tennis, walking, biking, etc. Sunscreen, a hat, and sun protective clothing should be worn even when inside, for two days following the procedure. Although results will vary, most people experience redness and mild peeling for up to ten days following the procedure. Excessive redness, swelling or crusting will occur if the post-procedure instructions are not followed.

When should I schedule the “Blue Light”?

The Blue Light should be scheduled at a time when you do not have outdoor activities planned for two days. Also, it should not be scheduled less than 14 days before a special event, as there will be some redness.

How do I prepare for the “Blue Light” procedure?

If you are prone to developing cold sores/fever blisters, notify the scheduler pre-procedure or technician the day of the procedure so they may coordinate a prescription for an antiviral medication. On the day of the procedure come to our office without moisturizer, sunscreen, or makeup. Bring a book, magazine, crossword puzzle, or other diversion, as there will be a waiting period after the Levulan medication is applied.

What is the aftercare following “Blue Light”?

Cleanse treatment area with a gentle cleanser such as Cetaphil. A sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or above is necessary, even if you are not planning on going outside. We suggest a sunscreen that contains zinc or titanium. Appropriate sunscreens are available for purchase in our office. If your skin becomes very irritated, use an over the counter 1% Hydrocortisone Cream twice a day. If this does not relieve your discomfort, contact us and we can send a prescription strength cortisone cream to the pharmacy of your choice.

Do “Blue Light” treatments replace liquid nitrogen, Efudex, Carac, Aldara?

Blue Light will hopefully minimize the need for these other treatments. However, they may still be necessary for thicker lesions or stubborn areas.

Is “Blue Light” covered by insurance?

The Blue Light treatment for actinic keratoses is covered by most health insurances. However, we will pre-approve your treatment to confirm coverage by your insurance company before scheduling the procedure.