



*We listen...  
We'll take our time...  
We'll make sure.*

**American Dermatology Associates**

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## **ORAL PUVA TREATMENT**

You are considering a treatment called “photochemotherapy,” which involves taking psoralen capsules by mouth (8-methoxypsoralen, also known as Oxsoralen Ultra) followed by exposure to a special kind of ultraviolet light known as UVA or long-wave ultraviolet light.

The psoralen molecule reaches the highest concentration in the skin about 1 to 2 hours after being taken by mouth. If it is activated at that time by ultraviolet light it will have its maximum possible effect. Please note that during the 24-hour period after **taking the pills**, you will still be sensitive to artificial or natural (sunlight) ultraviolet light. You must therefore avoid exposure to sunlight during that time period, even sunlight coming through window glass, by wearing protective clothing and using the recommended sunscreen (SPF 45 or greater) on the face and other exposed areas of the body to avoid burning of the skin. Because of the possibility that small amounts of psoralen persist in the lens of the eye as well, the protective eyeglasses must be worn throughout the day after ingestion of Oxsoralen Ultra, indoors and outdoors, except while asleep.

During the light treatment itself, you will be provided with special close-fitting goggles. We are asking you to protect your eyes because experimental albino animals that, without such protection were given large doses of psoralen and ultraviolet light developed cataracts. Cataracts have also developed in humans on PUVA treatment who were careless about wearing sunglasses. The risk of developing cataracts with appropriate eye protection should be small. As an additional precaution, we are asking you to be examined by an ophthalmologist before treatments begin and yearly thereafter.

Precisely how PUVA works is not known. Its mechanism of action probably relates to the fact that when psoralen is activated by light, it inhibits the abnormally rapid multiplication of cells and also suppresses especially ultraviolet light, causes skin cancer and “aging” of the skin in a man, the possibility exists that such changes might occur in patients receiving PUVA treatments. In experimental animals, such as albino mice that have no defense against ultraviolet irradiation, photosensitivity response to ultraviolet light and psoralen has been reported to induce skin cancer. In patients treated with PUVA, there are reports of an increased risk of skin cancers (basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinomas) and large “freckles” called PUVA lentigos. In addition, there have been reports of melanoma in patients who have received extensive amounts of PUVA.

There are a handful of patients worldwide that have developed an unpredictable allergic reaction to psoralen in the liver. It can occur after only 6-8 treatments and is characterized by nausea, fatigue, flu-like symptoms and jaundice. If recognized quickly, it usually resolves spontaneously without problems. Please let us know immediately if you develop any other these symptoms.

Since the effects of the methoxsalen on a fetus, sperm or ovum are unknown, we recommend that you use birth control measures while being treated. This should be discussed with your physician before beginning treatment.

PUVA treatment appears to be effective for a number of skin diseases in most individuals. However, there are some patients who are resistant to this therapy. Others who are sensitive to the PUVA treatments can develop a temporary sunburn-like reaction. Please remember that PUVA therapy is **not a cure**. An average of 30 treatments given 2-3 times a week is required for clearing, following which maintenance treatments at less frequent intervals (once a week to every third week or less) are given.

Topical therapy should not be used while undergoing PUVA therapy unless prescribed by your physician. Although most areas of psoriasis are eventually controlled with continued PUVA alone, combination therapy may occasionally be prescribed for certain resistant areas./ You are encouraged to use bland lubrication ointments.

Since other drugs can adversely interact with ultraviolet light, please consult your physician regarding other medications, pills and drugs which you are taking, even if only irregularly. This also pertains to non-prescription, over-the-counter preparations.

Other sources of ultraviolet light, artificial or natural (sunlight), should be avoided, even on the days when you are not undergoing PUVA therapy, unless adequate protection is provided. You risk burning your skin if you are exposed to other light sources while being treated with PUVA.

PUVA was approved in 1982 for the treatment of severe psoriasis. It has been of great benefit to the majority of patients who have received PUVA. Your doctor has had a great deal of experience with this therapy. Any questions you have regarding PUVA can be answered by calling our office at 913-631-6330.

In order to administer your light treatment in a timely fashion:

- 1) Please try to keep the appointment time you were given so that no one has to wait an excessive length of time.
- 2) We certainly know the doctor is not always on time. We do understand that your life is hectic as well. If you are unable to keep your appointment or need to reschedule an appointment to a later time your appointment or need to reschedule an appointment to a later time, please notify the photo therapy nurse. Do not show up unannounced and expect to be treated immediately.

The photo therapy nurse can be reached at 913-631-6330 Monday through Friday during business hours.  
Thank you!