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MOHS Micrographic Surgery

Information sheet for patients receiving Levulan Photodynamic Therapy (PDT)

Actinic keratoses

- Actinic Keratoses (AK's) are rough scaly patches on the skin caused by the sun referred to as pre-cancerous lesions. They can progress to a type of skin cancer called Squamous Cell Carcinoma.

Actinic keratoses can be prevented by:

- Wearing protective clothing including a wide brimmed hat
- Avoiding the sun at mid-day when UV rays are the strongest
- Using a broad spectrum sun block with an SPF of at least 30 and reapplying every 2 hours when outside.

Levulan photodynamic therapy can destroy AK's

- Maximum improvement occurs with a series of 2-3 treatment 4 weeks apart
- Some people are cleared after just one treatment

The basic science behind Levulan Photodynamic Therapy

- Levulan (20% aminolevulinic acid (ALA)) is a naturally occurring compound approved by the FDA to treat AK's
- When applied to the skin, Levulan is selectively absorbed into rapidly growing cells in the top layer of skin (the epidermis)
- Levulan is converted into a powerful photosensitizer
- After being left on the skin for at least 60 minutes ALA is activated by a blue light source which damages or destroys targeted epidermal cells.

Contraindications to PDT

- History of photosensitivity or porphyria
- Blood clotting defects
- Pregnancy or nursing
- Allergies to porphyrins or ALA
- Taking medications that cause photosensitivity
- Inability to avoid sun exposure, bright lights for 2 days

Morning of treatment

- If you have a history of recurring cold sores (Herpes simplex) start oral antiviral agent
- Clean your skin, no makeup, moisturizer or sunscreen

Treatment:

- Consent form will be reviewed/signed
- Area being treated will be cleansed
- Levulan will be applied to the area
- Levulan will incubate for specified time
- BLU light exposure begins for appropriate period of time

Day of treatment

- Skin will be pink or red
- May have swelling, especially on lips and around eyes
- Mild to moderate pain may be experienced
- Begin applying ice packs or cool compresses to treated area
- Remain indoors and avoid direct sunlight for 48 hours
- Take analgesics (Tylenol, Advil) as needed
- Keep skin moist with water based lotions
- Use 1% over the counter hydrocortisone if needed
- Call 805-379-3376 with any questions or concerns

Days 2-7

- Sunburn like reaction, including redness
- Peeling, crusting, oozing
- Dryness
- Discomfort – usually subsides by day 3
- Swelling
- Warmth in treated areas
- Acne break out
- Pigment changes – temporary darkening of treated areas

What to do:

- Avoid sunlight and try to stay indoors on Day 2. Photosensitivity can last up to 48 hours
- Ice packs as needed for discomfort and welling
- Warm (not hot) shower
- Water based moisturizer
- 1% hydrocortisone cream for skin irritation

Over the next few weeks:

- Dark spots will lighten or peel
- Crusting and peeling should be complete

Follow up appointments

- Treatment can be repeated approximately 4 weeks apart if needed
- The number of treatment varies with each person
- Subsequent treatment may have an additional 15 minute incubation period
- A follow up with your dermatology provider should be made a few months after your treatment