

Photodynamic Therapy: What You Can Expect

(for non-cancer conditions)

This material will help you understand your photodynamic therapy treatment and what you can expect.

What is photodynamic therapy?

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is a light treatment used to close-off abnormal blood vessels in your eye. First, you will receive an injection of a light sensitive medicine. This medicine will work its way through your bloodstream. The medicine is activated (switched on) by light from a laser. Once it is switched on, it works to seal the abnormal blood vessels. This helps to stop leakage and bleeding. A benefit of PDT is that it destroys these blood vessels with little damage to nearby tissue.

PDT is sometimes used with other treatments such as surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy.

What can I expect before my procedure?

There are no special preparations for PDT. You should eat normally and take all your regular medications before you come in for your treatment.

Plan to bring with you (or wear) the following items on the day of your procedure:

- Dark sunglasses
- Gloves
- Wide brimmed hat
- Long sleeved shirt, long pants, socks and shoes

The medication you will receive will make your skin very sensitive to sunlight. These items will help protect your skin from burns.

PDT is an outpatient procedure, so you will be able to go home the same day. Be sure to arrange for a responsible adult to come with you, stay during the procedure, and take you home. Your eyes will be blurry after the procedure, so you should not drive.

What can I expect on the day of my procedure?

On the day of your procedure, you will come to the Kellogg Eye Center Retina Clinic. You will receive an injection of the light sensitive medication into your arm. After about 10-15 minutes, your eye care team will bring you back to the laser room.

You will sit at the laser slit lamp (which looks very similar to the regular slit lamp you see in the exam room). Your eye doctor will make sure you are comfortable. Then, s/he will put numbing drops in your eyes. S/he will also place a special contact lens with gel on it in your eye to help hold it open and focus the laser energy. This should not hurt, but it may feel a little strange. It will be removed as soon as the treatment is over.

Your doctor will then shine a bright light into your eye. S/he will position, focus and aim the laser very carefully at the part of the eye where the abnormal blood vessels are located. The entire procedure usually takes about 20 minutes to complete. Most patients have no pain with this procedure.

What can I expect after my procedure?

After PDT, you may notice temporary changes in your vision. Your vision may decrease, become blurry, or you may see flashes and/or floaters for a few days following your treatment.

As mentioned, the medicine you receive through the injection will make your skin and eyes very sensitive to light. You should avoid direct sunlight for about 48 hours after your treatment to prevent severe sunburn. If you do need to go outside during the day, be sure to wear dark sunglasses and a wide brimmed hat and keep all your skin covered. Sunscreens used to protect you from ultraviolet (UV) light will NOT protect your skin. This is because the medicine makes you sensitive to visible light that is usually safe for human skin

You will see your doctor in about 4-6 weeks for a follow-up visit. You may need to have multiple treatments make sure all the abnormal blood vessels are destroyed.

Are there any complications related to photodynamic therapy?

As with most eye procedures, there is a chance of complication. Some people have pain, swelling, and/or bleeding at site where the medicine was injected. In this case use an ice pack at the injection site. Your eye doctor will discuss all of the potential complications with you before your procedure.

You should call your eye doctor right away if you have any symptoms that worry you. If you call the clinic after clinic hours, you will be instructed to get in touch with the eye doctor on call. There is an eye doctor on call every day of the year.

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