Dermatology department

Phototesting patients

This leaflet is for patients who have been asked to have phototesting.

We are asking you to have phototesting because we think you may have one of the number of skin conditions that are triggered or made worse by the invisible ultraviolet (UV) part of sunlight.

This will help our dermatologists to make a diagnosis and treat your condition. The phototesting and receiving your results will take place across two appointments normally on Thursday (with the nurse) and Friday, next day (with the dermatologist).

What is phototesting?
Phototesting with The Monochromator machine is used to make a diagnosis of Photosensitivity.

The Monochromator machine can produce light of any of the wavelengths present in the sunlight.

Ultraviolet A and Uvb will be used during this test, as UV light is the part of sunlight that causes most skin problems. The test is not painful.

While having this test, we will ask you to remove your top and wear a gown. We will then ask you to lie down on your front on a couch where the test will take place. We usually test small skin areas on your back. We will mark your back with a marker pen to make it easy to read the test the next day by the dermatologists.

How long does a Phototesting session last?
We normally test with a standard regime that may last between two to three hours. The test can sometimes take up to four or five hours if we suspect a diagnosis of Solar Urticaria.

The nurse will make a note of any early reaction developing on your skin. The dermatologist will discuss the results of the test and the relevant treatment with you.

What should I bring for my Phototesting appointment?

- List of oral/topical medication that you normally take.
- We suggest you wear dark clothes to avoid the marker pen staining pale fabrics.
- You are welcome to bring something to read or listen to while having this test.
- Please stop applying moisturisers or steroid cream to your back three days before your Phototesting appointment.
• You will need to keep your back dry after the Phototesting to avoid the marker pen being washed off and allow the dermatologist to check your back on the following day and detect any reactions and make a diagnosis.

**What are the benefits of Phototesting?**

• Phototesting helps us to diagnose Photosensitivity and to discuss possible treatment.

**What are the risks of Phototesting?**

• You may develop a rash on your skin while having this test performed or your skin can swell, become red, or even blister. This may happen to the area of skin exposed to the machine or to a more extensive area. A reaction on your skin is something that we are expecting to happen with this test. We normally consult our dermatologist if the area involved is more than expected and may decide to stop the phototesting.
• We recommend that someone else will accompany you home once the test is complete.

**Where is the test performed?**

The test is performed in one of the treatment rooms in Clinic 7 Outpatient department level 3.

**Privacy and dignity**

We will ask you to remove your top and wear a gown to carry out the test.
Your privacy will be ensured by curtains which are tightly closed around the couch where you will be lying down.
We can only see one patient at a time; therefore you are not going to share the changing area with same or different sex patients.

**Cancellation**

If you need to cancel the appointment please ring Clinic 7 on 01223 216234; or if you have any concerns or questions about your Phototesting appointment please call 01223 217391.

You can leave a message and will be contacted as soon as possible.
We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.
For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.
Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

Document history
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