

Photodynamic Therapy: After the Procedure



Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) uses a drug and laser to help treat symptoms caused by cancer of the esophagus or lung. Here is what you need to know about caring for yourself after you have had both the drug and laser treatment.

PDT treatment process:

- Step 1:** First you had the drug Photofrin™ (Porfimer) through an IV (in your vein).
- Step 2:** Usually 2 - 4 days later, laser treatment is given in the operating room where you have general anesthesia.

Usually about 2 Days later, Step 2 will be repeated again.

Your doctor will decide what follow-up is needed based on the result of this treatment.

Side effects

The main side effect is photosensitivity. That means you will have a strong reaction to bright light or sunlight for 4 - 6 weeks after this treatment. Light sensitivity begins as soon as you receive the drug, Photofrin.

Other side effects may occur such as:

- Fever or chills
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Tiredness or weakness
- Swelling in any part of the body
- Loss of appetite
- Trouble sleeping

How to take care of yourself after having PDT

Use these precautions while you are sensitive to light (photosensitive):

- Avoid being in direct sunlight for 4-6 weeks. This includes sunlight through windows or skylights. Close window blinds or curtains on windows.
- Avoid strong indoor lighting like halogen lamps or examination lamps.
- Wear protective clothing and sunglasses outdoors even on a cloudy day. Cover your skin and protect your eyes. Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants or skirts, gloves, wide-brimmed hats, socks, shoes and sunglasses.
- Wearing sunscreen does NOT protect your skin from this reaction.

- Avoid helmet-type hair dryers.
- It is not harmful to watch TV, go to a movie or work in front of a computer.
- It is good to be exposed to some dim indoor light. Do not stay in total darkness.

Call your doctor if:

- You have problems with any side effects listed

Call right away if:

- Your skin becomes red, swollen or blistered at any point after treatment

How do I check to see if I am no longer light sensitive?

About 4 weeks after receiving Photofrin, you can test your light sensitivity like this:

- Cut a hole, 2 inches in diameter, in a small paper bag. Place the bag over your hand. Expose your hand to direct sunlight for 10 minutes. If your skin reacts within 24 hours, you should continue with photosensitivity precautions for another week. Then repeat this test.

Precautions with Photofrin

Many foods and other medicines can interact with the drug, Photofrin. You need to have information so you know how to use it safely.

Make sure you receive written information and education about this medicine and that you understand it. Please ask your doctor or nurse if there is something you do not understand, or if you have questions.

If you would like more written information, please call the Library for Health Information at (614)293-3707. You can also make the request by e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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