

NARROW-BAND UVB PHOTOTHERAPY

Broad-band ultraviolet B (UVB) therapy has been an accepted form of phototherapy for 80 years; in fact, you may have been treated with broad-band UVB in the past. In addition to broad-band UVB, ultraviolet A (UVA) therapy, together with oral psoralen pills (PUVA) has been one of the other cornerstones of phototherapy programs going back to the 1970's. Both of these therapies have been very successful but they have limitations. Narrow-band UVB therapy is a new and exciting treatment in the realm of phototherapy and has replaced broad-band UVB therapy because it is more effective and probably safer.

Conventional fluorescent UVB (broad-band UVB) lamps emit a range of ultraviolet light rays that have therapeutic and nontherapeutic affects. With the advent of narrow band UVB lamps, only a small range of UVB wavelengths are emitted (311 to 313 nm). This is desirable because skin gets the greatest therapeutic effects from this narrow-band, with decreased undesirable effects from the nontherapeutic wave lengths such as burning, premature aging, and increasing the risk of skin cancer development. This narrow-band is most effective for the treatment of psoriasis and other skin conditions. Due to the fact that many of the unwanted light rays have been removed, larger treatment doses are able to be delivered to the patient, which generally translates to a speedier time for improvement.

In most cases topical medication is used along with the light treatment. It is important to use a petrolatum based moisturizer as directed by the phototherapy nurse. This helps smooth out the scaling and flaky skin and allows better penetration of the UVB light. The phototherapy nursing staff will provide instructions on the proper application of these products.

Many patients receiving phototherapy also use topical therapy to treat more stubborn areas or areas not exposed to the treatment such as the scalp or skin fold areas. This is determined for each individual patient

Narrow-band UVB light does not cause as much of a problem with sunburn as the broad band UVB but it can happen. Most sunburn reactions are only temporary and usually cause minor discomfort. Rarely patients can experience a significant sunburn with blisters. The light doses are controlled on an individual basis to minimize any discomfort and burning that may occur with the treatment.

The patients that may benefit from narrow-band UVB treatment include those patients who are resistant to broad-band UVB or PUVA as well as those who for medical reasons may not be eligible for PUVA. In addition, narrow band UVB may also be combined with many other psoriasis treatments including oral and/or injectable medications.

Narrow-band UVB is one of the most effective treatments for widespread psoriasis, chronic dermatitis (eczema), vitiligo and many other skin conditions. If you have any other questions regarding this treatment, please ask before you leave the office.