

TREATMENT OF SKIN CANCERS USING PDT - ALA

How PDT - ALA works

- Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) is a treatment that uses light to activate a photosensitising agent called aminolaevulinic acid (ALA). ALA is an anticancer agent that absorbs into the skin and concentrates in malignant cells and rapidly growing cells such as sun spots. Very little is absorbed into normal skin cells. Once activated by the light source, ALA causes destruction of these cells.
- This treatment method allows specific areas of the skin to be treated, causing little or no damage to the normal skin and resulting in minimal down time for the patient.

Who should NOT have treatment with ALA?

- Pregnant or breastfeeding women.
- People with porphyria tumour.

The procedure

- Prior to the first PDT - ALA treatment, the skin cancer requires thinning down. Local anaesthetic will be injected around the site. The tumour is then curetted to thin it out, allowing the ALA solution to penetrate more effectively into the skin. The first PDT - ALA treatment usually proceeds within five days.
- On the day of the first PDT - ALA treatment, the skin cancer is prepared by removing the surface scale.
- The ALA solution is applied to the skin cancer and dressed. A light-proof cover is also applied.
- The ALA takes around three hours to penetrate the cells. You may go home during this time and return for the next stage of treatment.
- After three hours, the dressings are removed and the ALA is activated using the "Actilite", a source of extreme red light. During treatment you will wear protective goggles. This takes 10 minutes.
- You may feel some pain or a prickling sensation during light exposure.
- This procedure is repeated seven days later.

Home instructions

- Stay out of sun for up to three days.
- The area will appear sun burnt and will peel from day three through to day seven. It is very common to have a burning or stinging sensation, some crusting, swelling, and redness. You may wish to take time off work.
- Application of moisturisers is encouraged after 48 hours.
- The treated areas should have settled completely after one week.

If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact us.