



[Authoritative facts](#) about the skin from the [New Zealand Dermatological Society Incorporated](#).

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UVB Phototherapy

UVB phototherapy refers to irradiation with short wave ultraviolet radiation. To treat the whole body, the patient, undressed, stands in a specially designed cabinet containing fluorescent light tubes.

Some units offer [narrowband UVB](#) phototherapy (311nm).

Phototherapy cabinet



Whole body unit



Control panel of Daavlin combined UVB/PUVA unit

Increasing doses of UVB are given each exposure (three to five times weekly), aiming to turn the skin slightly pink. Sometimes uncomfortable [sunburn](#) will occur, at its worst about 8 hours after treatment. This fades over the next few days and should be treated with frequent and liberal [emollients](#).

The effect of UVB is similar to the sun. Excessive exposure contributes to [aging skin](#) and to the risk of [skin cancer](#).

Psoriasis

[Psoriasis](#) is a common inherited skin disorder, which may vary considerably in extent and severity. Neither phototherapy nor any other available treatment effects a permanent cure.

UVB is suitable for most people with extensive psoriasis. It may not suit those with very fair skin, or those whose psoriasis gets worse in sunlight.

Initially most patients have their treatment three times a week. The first few exposures will be short (less than 5 minutes). The length of exposure is gradually increased, according to the patient's response, up to a maximum of 30 minutes per session. Few patients require such long exposures, most being controlled with shorter times.

Most psoriasis patients will have their psoriasis cleared or much improved after 12 to 24 treatments. At this stage treatments will usually be discontinued. Even without treatment, the skin may remain clear for some months. However, the psoriasis may later flare up again, and further UVB treatment may be necessary.

Those cases of psoriasis which appear to be resistant to UVB may still be helped by another form of ultraviolet treatment called [PUVA](#), or other treatments (e.g. ointments or tablets).

Dermatitis

UVB is occasionally used for severe cases of [dermatitis](#). Frequency and dosage of treatment is similar to that used for psoriasis. However, a course of phototherapy may need to be more prolonged than that generally required for psoriasis.

Instructions

- Keep all scheduled appointments. Allow time for changing.
- Tell the staff about your health problems, including eye disease.
- Let staff know if you take any medications. Some may make you more prone to burning.
- Do not apply any ointments or cosmetics (especially perfumes and [coal tar](#) products) except as directed by your doctor or UVB staff.
- Avoid natural sun exposure on treatment and non-treatment days.
- Apply broad spectrum [sunscreen](#) to face and hands before treatment.
- Cover male genitalia – this area should not be exposed to ultraviolet radiation.
- Arrange to be seen regularly by your [dermatologist](#).

Related information

On DermNet NZ:

- [Phototherapy](#)
- [PUVA](#)
- [Narrowband UVB](#)
- [New Zealand dermatologists offering phototherapy](#)

Other websites:

Books about skin diseases:

See the [DermNet NZ bookstore](#)

DermNet does not provide an on-line consultation service.

If you have any concerns with your skin or its treatment, see a [dermatologist](#) for advice.

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