

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

Complete discussion guide

A printable set of questions to bring to appointments with your care team. Each section below is also available as its own one-page checklist.

Sections

1. What Is Photodynamic Therapy and How Does It Work?
2. Why Might My Dermatologist Recommend PDT Over Other AK Treatments?
3. Am I a Good Candidate for Photodynamic Therapy?
4. What Happens During a PDT Treatment Session, Step by Step?
5. How Should I Prepare for My PDT Appointment?
6. What Side Effects and Downtime Should I Expect After PDT?
7. How Do I Care for My Skin After PDT?
8. How Many PDT Sessions Will I Need, and What Results Can I Expect?
9. How Is Discomfort During PDT Managed?
10. Is PDT Safe, and Who Should Avoid It?

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt>



What Is Photodynamic Therapy and How Does It Work?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/what-is-pdt-and-how-it-works>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Which photosensitizer will you use, and how long will it need to incubate before the light exposure?

- ☐ Will you use a lamp-based light source or daylight PDT, and why is that the right choice for my skin?

- ☐ How will you confirm the treated area has absorbed enough of the solution before activating it with light?

- ☐ How much of my sun-damaged skin — beyond the AKs you can see — will be included in the treated field?

- ☐ What should I expect to feel during the light exposure itself?



Why Might My Dermatologist Recommend PDT Over Other AK Treatments?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/why-choose-pdt>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Given the pattern of my sun damage, would you expect PDT, cryotherapy, or a topical cream to work best for me?

- ☐ How does my immune status factor into your recommendation?

- ☐ Would combining a short course of topical treatment with PDT make sense in my case?

- ☐ What cosmetic outcome should I expect from each option you're considering?

- ☐ If we start with one approach and it doesn't clear enough of the AKs, what's the next step?



Am I a Good Candidate for Photodynamic Therapy?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/am-i-a-candidate-for-pdt>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Based on how many AKs I have and where they are, would I benefit more from PDT or a spot treatment?

- ☐ Are any of my current AKs too thick for PDT to work well, and if so, what do we do first?

- ☐ Given what I've already tried, why are you recommending PDT now?

- ☐ Is there anything in my health history or current medications that would make PDT unsafe for me?

- ☐ Can I realistically avoid direct sunlight for the recommended period after treatment?

What Happens During a PDT Treatment Session, Step by Step?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/what-happens-during-a-pdt-session>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

-
- ☐ How long will my incubation period be, and will the area be covered during it?

 - ☐ What light source will be used, and roughly how long does the exposure step take?

 - ☐ What can be done to manage discomfort during the light exposure?

 - ☐ What should I plan for immediately afterward — do I need someone to drive me, or can I go straight back to normal activities?

 - ☐ What should my skin look like in the hours right after treatment, and what would be a reason to call you?

How Should I Prepare for My PDT Appointment?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/preparing-for-your-pdt-appointment>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

-
- ☐ Are any of my current medications or supplements likely to affect how my skin reacts to PDT?

 - ☐ Should I stop using any topical products before treatment, and if so, how many days beforehand?

 - ☐ How long will the appointment take, and how strict does my sun avoidance need to be on the trip home?

 - ☐ What should I bring to cover the treated area afterward?

 - ☐ Will I need someone to drive me, or is that just a precaution?

 - ☐ What can I expect to feel during the light-exposure portion of treatment?



What Side Effects and Downtime Should I Expect After PDT?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/pdt-side-effects-and-downtime>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ How much pain should I expect during my treatment, and what can be done to reduce it?

- ☐ How long should I expect redness, swelling, and crusting to last for my specific treatment area?

- ☐ Exactly how many days do I need to avoid direct sunlight afterward?

- ☐ What symptoms should prompt me to call you rather than wait it out?

- ☐ Is the reaction I'm having typical, or should I come in to be seen?



How Do I Care for My Skin After PDT?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/pdt-aftercare-and-recovery>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Exactly how long should I avoid sunlight and bright indoor light after my treatment?

- ☐ What products should I use to clean and moisturize the treated area?

- ☐ What level of redness, swelling, or crusting is normal for me, and what would be too much?

- ☐ Is there anything I can take or apply for discomfort?

- ☐ When can I resume my normal skincare routine and wear makeup again?

- ☐ What symptoms should prompt me to call your office right away?



How Many PDT Sessions Will I Need, and What Results Can I Expect?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/how-many-pdt-sessions-and-results>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

☐ Based on my lesions, how many PDT sessions do you expect I'll need?

☐ When will you check whether the treatment worked, and what will that visit involve?

☐ What clearance rate is realistic for someone with my skin and lesion type?

☐ If some lesions don't clear, what would be the next step?

☐ How long do you expect these results to last for me?

☐ How often should I have routine skin checks going forward?



How Is Discomfort During PDT Managed?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/managing-discomfort-during-pdt>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

-
- ☐ What cooling measures will be used during my session, and can I ask for more if I need it?
 - ☐ Is a topical numbing cream, injected local anesthetic, or nerve block available at this practice?
 - ☐ Should I take an over-the-counter pain reliever before my appointment, and if so, which one?
 - ☐ Am I a candidate for daylight PDT instead of a conventional lamp-based session?
 - ☐ What should I do if the discomfort becomes hard to tolerate partway through treatment?
-



Is PDT Safe, and Who Should Avoid It?

Photodynamic Therapy for Actinic Keratosis

<https://www.beatingskincancer.com/actinic-keratosis/pdt/pdt-safety-and-who-should-avoid-it>

Appointment date

Doctor's name

- ☐ Do any of my current medications or supplements increase my sensitivity to light?

- ☐ Should I be screened for porphyria or another photosensitivity disorder before treatment?

- ☐ Given my lupus (or other photosensitive condition), is PDT still a reasonable option for me?

- ☐ What should I realistically expect to be able to do — and avoid — in the 24–48 hours after treatment?

- ☐ What would a severe reaction look like, and when should I call the office instead of waiting it out?
