This leaflet aims to answer the most commonly asked questions, but please feel free to ask your Nurse or Doctor if you are unsure of anything.

What is Topical PUVA?
Topical PUVA therapy is a treatment in which a medication called psoralen (P) is applied to the skin before exposure of the skin to special wavelengths of light called UVA (Ultraviolet A). The psoralen can be applied in a variety of ways, either by soaking part of the body e.g. hands or feet, in a basin of psoralen solution, bathing the whole body in psoralen solution or by applying psoralen preparation directly on the affected areas. Your Doctor will discuss with you the most suitable method of treatment for you. The psoralen reacts in your skin with the UVA to cause effects that help in a variety of skin conditions and also makes you more sensitive to sunlight.

Which conditions are treated with Topical PUVA?
Topical PUVA therapy has been found to be a useful treatment for many skin conditions including psoriasis, eczema, mycosis fungoides and many more.

Where do I have PUVA?
PUVA therapy is carried out in a number of Units across Scotland.

What happens when I get there?
On your first visit a member of the phototherapy nursing staff will go through the nursing documents used. They will show you round the unit and will explain to you the treatment and all the procedures.

The doctor will have checked the medicines that you are taking at the moment, if your tablets (including anything that you have obtained over-the-counter) change in any way please let the nursing staff know before they start your next treatment. This is because some tablets can affect the way the treatment works.

How long will I have PUVA treatment?
This varies from person to person, usually twice a week, an average course lasts 8 weeks. The Nursing staff will assess you at each visit; if you require to be seen by a doctor this can be arranged.

What about my creams?
Please continue to use regular moisturisers during your course of treatment. If you use any other treatment creams the nursing staff will tell you if you should carry on using them.

Things to avoid
- On the day of treatment please avoid using perfumed products such as, cosmetics, perfume or aftershave as these can make your skin more sensitive to the light. Please also avoid using sunless tanning products during treatment.
- You should not use Salicylic acid preparations or any moisturiser containing yellow soft paraffin before treatment as this can act like a sunscreen and stop the treatment working.
- You should not plan a pregnancy during your PUVA treatment. While no problems have been reported it is a good rule to avoid PUVA when you are pregnant. If pregnancy does occur, you must inform your supervising doctor.
- During your course of PUVA treatment you should avoid sunbathing and using sunbeds.
- Severe haircuts should be avoided during your course of treatment. If necessary, have your hair cut prior to starting treatment or within the first two weeks.

Unwanted side effects that could happen during a course of PUVA:
- It is likely you will get a mild sunburn-like reaction during your treatment.
- It is possible you may get a spotty, itchy rash during your treatment course (about one out of 10 people do).
- Depending on your natural skin colour, if your skin goes brown easily in sunlight you may get a dark tan.

If you develop any of these side effects or any other change causing you concern please discuss this with the nursing staff.
Unwanted side effects that could happen after a course of PUVA

- Skin Cancer
  - People who have a lot of sunlight exposure have an increased risk of skin cancer. In Scotland, approximately one out of 10 of us will develop a skin cancer. (It is worth noting that 8 out of 10 Australians have a skin cancer at some time in their lives).
  - If you have more than 200 PUVA treatments, you may have 5 times the risk of developing a skin cancer.

- Photoaging.
  - It is also possible you will develop sunlight induced skin changes with wrinkling and skin discolouration, similar to that of the ageing process or produced by cigarette smoking.

Review:
You will be asked to attend your local clinic for a specific skin cancer review once you have received more than 200 PUVA treatments.

Special requirements for Topical PUVA treatment.
Protective goggles and faceshield are provided during treatment unless otherwise stated by your doctor. Psoralen preparation makes the skin sensitive to sunlight; extra caution should therefore be taken to protect your skin from sunlight throughout the course of treatment. UVA can penetrate through glass therefore care needs to be taken both indoors and while outside during daylight hours.

Final points
- Patients attending for whole body treatment will have to soak in a bath of psoralen solution for 15 minutes then receive UVA treatment immediately

- Patients attending for hand and/or feet treatment will soak the affected area in a basin of psoralen solution for 15 minutes then wait in the department for a further 30 minutes before UVA treatment.

- Patients attending for topical PUVA to localised areas will have the preparation applied, and then wait in the department for a further 15 minutes before UVA treatment.

- The close fitting goggles provided should not be removed while in the cubicle.

- Most patients will be treated without clothing in the cabinet; however male patients should wear genital protection such as a sports support or sock during treatment.

- You should not sunbathe or use a sunbed during your course of treatment and you should avoid unnecessary exposure to sunlight.

- Alcohol should be avoided before your treatments.

- Valuables are your responsibility

- If you have a history of cold sores, total sunblock should be applied prior to each treatment.