

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 most effective and probably safer.

Conventional fluorescent UVB (broad-band UVB) lamps emit a range of ultraviolet light rays that have therapeutic and nontherapeutic effects. 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 many cases topical medication is used along with the light treatment. It is also important to use a moisturizer before the treatment, which may help smooth out the scaling and flaky skin allowing better penetration of the UVB light.

In general, I do not recommend using cortisone creams along with the narrow-band ultraviolet light treatment. This is because the steroid cream can allow the psoriasis to come back faster in the future. On non sun exposed areas like the scalp or skin folds, topical cortisone medication can be used.

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 patient's 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 is also combined with many of the other psoriasis treatments available including other pills and/or injectable medications.

Narrow-band UVB is one of the most effective treatments for widespread psoriasis.

If you have any other questions regarding this treatment, please ask before you leave the office.