

Guidelines for medicine or diet induced photosensitivity

This guide has been written to help answer some of your questions about photosensitivity caused by medication or diet. You have been given this guide because we think you may have photosensitivity caused by medication or diet or are being started on medication that may cause photosensitivity.

What is a medicine or diet induced photosensitivity?

Some medicines can make people become sensitive to light. This is called a medicine induced photosensitivity.

Some foods can also make people sensitive to light. This is called a diet induced photosensitivity.

People with photosensitivity caused by medication or diet develop a rash on skin that is exposed to sunlight. The skin can be very red or develop a dry, bumpy or blistering rash. The rash can be itchy in some people and not in others. It can be very easy to bring out the rash with sometimes as little as a few minutes exposure to light setting it off. The rash is often there all year round, even on dull days. Some people can even develop the rash from light coming through windows or from artificial lights (fluorescent bulbs).

What causes medicine induced photosensitivity?

Some medicines can react with ultra-violet light to cause a reaction in the skin and eyes. The doctor will check through all the medicines you are taking to work out which one might be causing the problem. Drugs such as voriconazole and doxycycline have this effect.

Prevention

Prevention is better than treatment, therefore using a F50 sun cream that protects against UVA & UVB rays, wearing a hat & avoiding sitting in direct sunlight particularly at the hottest time of day (11am - 3pm) are important.

How can medicine induced photosensitivity be treated?

Most of the medicines that people are prescribed by their doctors have alternatives. We will carefully look through the medicines you are taking and write to your GP recommending which ones she/he could try swapping for another version, if appropriate. Photosensitivity is common when taking voriconazole.

You have been prescribed the medicines that you are taking because you need them to stay healthy. You should not just stop taking any of them. Your consultant or GP will recommend alternatives and then keep an eye on how you are on any new medicine.

Once your doctor has given you a different version of the tablets that were making you sensitive to light, it will take about 6 months for all the old medicine to completely leave your body. This means you might still be light sensitive for several months after stopping the tablets.

We may offer you an appointment for the specialist photoinvestigations tests to check that your reaction to light has returned to normal.

How will having a medicine or diet induced photosensitivity affect me?

If you have been diagnosed as having drug or diet induced photosensitivity you may have to make changes to your lifestyle until the drug or diet changes take effect. You should try to:

- Avoid the sun between 11am and 3pm.
- Wear protective clothing.
- Consider fitting special ultra-violet blocking film to windows in your house and car.
- Use a sunscreen that is SPF 30 or above (high UVB protection) and has four/five stars (high UVA protection). Remember to re-apply the sunscreen often.
- For visual sensitivity wear wrap-around sunglasses rated at 100% UV protection

Listen to the expert

We have recorded a talk by a specialist in photosensitivity which was given to our Aspergillosis Patients Support group meeting (http://www.nacpatients.org.uk/monthly_meetings) which covers all the issues in some depth. To listen to the talk you need a computer or mobile phone with internet connection and go to <http://www.nacpatients.org.uk/patients-support-meeting-January-2012>

Resources

Window film to block UV light

Bonwyke Ltd,
Unit 3, Salterns Lane Industrial Estate,
Salterns Lane
Fareham, Hampshire, PO16 0SU
Tel: +44 (0) 1329 289621
Email: sales@bonwyke.co.uk
www.bonwyke.co.uk

Madico UK,
Madico House, 98 Bolton Road,
Atherton, Manchester, M29 9LD Tel: 01942 891790
Alternative contacts:
High Wycombe Tel: 01494 450681
Huddersfield Tel: 01484 515933
London Tel: 020 8441 0449
Stafford Tel: 01785 242181
www.madicouk.com

Summerside Blinds,
Unit 14, North Leith Sands, Lindsay Road
Industrial Estate, Leith, EDINBURGH
EH6 4ER
Tel: 0131 553 1073 Fax: 0131 533 1073

Sunglasses

Should be 100% UV protection (look for the CE mark and BSEN 1836:1997 or sunglasses marked UV400)

Suncscreens available on prescription

Sunsense Ultra SPF50+
Delph SPF50+
Anthelios SPF50+
Uvistat SPF30 and SPF50+

Revised May 2015

