

Manchester Royal Eye Hospital  
Medical Retina Services

## Information for Patients

# Visudyne Photodynamic Therapy (PDT)

This booklet has been designed to help you understand what Visudyne (verteporfin) photodynamic therapy (PDT) is and how it works. It also contains useful information on what you can expect during treatment as well as some advice on what you should do before and after treatment.

## What is Visudyne PDT?

Visudyne PDT is a treatment option for some eye conditions involving leakage of fluid at the back of the eye. It has been shown to be effective in many studies but may currently be unlicensed for your condition and is being offered due to no effective alternative licensed treatments.

Visudyne PDT is a two-stage procedure using a combination of:

- A photosensitive (light activated) drug, called Visudyne, which is given through a drip into a vein in your arm over 10 minutes.
- A red light produced by a non-thermal laser, which is directed into your eye to activate the drug.

Visudyne PDT treatment may take weeks to have an effect and this effect may be long-term meaning that no further PDT is indicated. However, different treatments may continue to be needed including retreatment with PDT.

## What conditions does Visudyne PDT treat?

1. Certain types of wet Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD): which is where abnormal blood vessels grow behind the retina (photographic film at

the back of the eye). These abnormal blood vessels leak and bleed leading to damage of the macula (an area of the retina that allows you to see fine detail and colour) and deterioration of vision.

2. Chronic Central Serous Chorioretinopathy (CSCR): which is where blood vessels leak behind the retina, leading to damage of the macula and deterioration of vision.

3. Other less common retinal conditions.

### What does Visudyne PDT do?

The aim of Visudyne PDT is to reduce the potential for loss of central vision caused by conditions such as AMD or CSCR. The photosensitive drug in PDT works by destroying or sealing the leaking blood vessels behind the retina. Once the leaking blood vessels close, following successful PDT, the risk of further leakage and bleeding is reduced.

Unlike other laser treatments for eye disease, Visudyne PDT uses a non-thermal laser; the light produced by this type of laser does not burn the retina.

### What should I do to prepare for Visudyne PDT?

Visudyne PDT will cause your skin and eyes to become more sensitive to light. If you are exposed to bright light for too long, you can suffer a serious reaction like bad sunburn. Therefore, you must avoid direct sunlight and bright lights for the immediate 48 hours following treatment. Sunscreen creams do **not** offer any protection during this period.

To reduce the effect of this sensitivity, please bring (or wear) the following items when you attend for your treatment:

- Wide brimmed hat
- Dark tinted sunglasses
- Clothing that will fully cover your arms and legs
- Socks and shoes

You should also avoid attending the dentist or having surgical procedures done for 48 hours after PDT treatment as the very bright operating lights used in these situations could cause burns to the skin.

Please **do not** drive to the eye clinic for your treatment as you will be having dilating drops which blur your vision for up to 6 hours after the treatment and you will not be safe to drive home.

## What happens during Visudyne PDT?

On arrival at the clinic you will have your vision assessed and dilating drops put in your eye. The nurse will take a brief history from you regarding your general health, allergies, medications. You will be weighed, and your height measured.

You will be given an infusion (slow injection) of the light activated drug called Visudyne into one of the veins in your arm. This lasts for 10 minutes. The doctor will then numb your eye with an anaesthetic eye drop and place a special contact lens on your eye. A red light will be directed through the contact lens onto the affected area of your retina, for just over a minute. There is no heating, burning or pain during this time.

During the treatment, the laser machine makes a long beeping noise, however, please be assured this is normal.

## Who cannot have Visudyne PDT?

Visudyne PDT is not suitable for everyone. People with any of the following **should not** receive Visudyne PDT:

- Porphyria (a very rare condition)
- Severe liver disease
- Allergies to any of the ingredients of Verteporfin
- Pregnancy
- Breast feeding

Check with your ophthalmologist (eye doctor) or other healthcare professional if you think any of these apply to you.

## What are the side effects of Visudyne PDT?

Visudyne PDT is linked with a low rate of side effects. However, some patients experience adverse reactions to Visudyne PDT; these include:

- The injection site becoming red and painful
- Blurred vision for 48 hours following treatment. If this occurs it is important that you do not drive or operate machinery
- Headaches

- Back pain
- Severe decrease in vision
- The infusion contains sugars, and this is important to know if you are diabetic
- Allergic reaction (rare)

## What should I do following Visudyne PDT?

You **must avoid** direct sunlight and bright lights for 48 hours immediately after treatment. Bright lights include but are not limited to:

- Bright sunlight
- Solariums
- Halogen lighting in homes and offices (including bright halogen lamps and reading lamps)
- Undraped windows

Stay away from undraped windows or skylights for 48 hours and do not rely on UV sunscreens to protect against photosensitivity; they **will not** be effective.

## Can I go outside?

We advise that you **do not** go outside during daylight for the first 48 hours. However, if you do need to go outside in case of an emergency within the first 48 hours following treatment, it is strictly recommended that you wear:

- Wide brimmed hat
- Dark tinted sunglasses
- Clothing that will fully cover your arms and legs
- Socks and shoes

After 48 hours you may resume normal outdoor activities without any special precautions. It is important that you do not stay in the dark. Exposing your skin in indoor light helps to inactivate any remaining drug in the skin.

## Questions?

If you have any questions relating to this information or experience any problems following treatment, please contact a member of the nursing staff at the **Macular Treatment Centre** on **(0161) 276 3341** available Monday–Friday 8.00am–5.00pm.

You may also contact the **Emergency Eye Centre** on **(0161) 276 5597** everyday between 8.00 am- 9.00 pm. If your problem is urgent and the department above is closed or you are unable to get an answer, please contact **Ward 55** on **(0161) 276 5512** available 24 hours every day.

