

# Why Phototherapy?

## Safer

According to the National Psoriasis Foundation, phototherapy is “the safest treatment for psoriasis” because it has fewer side effects than biologics. An NPF article reports, “...biologics can increase the chance of infections and require monitoring for other adverse effects...the risks associated with phototherapy are fairly minor...”<sup>1</sup>

Biologics have a risk of adverse side effects because they work by suppressing the patient’s immune system, making the patient more vulnerable to infections. Cases of tuberculosis, pneumonia, and brain infection have been documented.<sup>2</sup>

“Light therapy is considered to be the safest way to treat psoriasis because you’re treating from the outside in.”

-Dr. Joel Gelfand,  
Director of the Psoriasis and Phototherapy Treatment Center  
at the University of Pennsylvania

## Effective

According to an article published in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology, phototherapy is as effective or more effective than other treatments:<sup>3</sup>

“Psoriasis Area and Severity Index 75 scores after [phototherapy] thrice weekly for 6 to 12 weeks are 70% and 80%, respectively. These outcomes are comparable or superior to biologics (infliximab and adalimumab: 80%; etanercept: 30-60%), whereas outcomes for traditional systemic medications are 30% (acitretin), 60% (methotrexate) and 70% (cyclosporine).”

-Lim, Henry W., et al. “Phototherapy in dermatology: A call to action.” *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*. 2015.

## Affordable

Home UV Units are a one-time cost that provide years of treatment, saving patients thousands of dollars in co-pays. Patients are seeing surprise out-of-pocket costs with drugs at the pharmacy because of new co-pay accumulator policies. Some insurance companies no longer count prescription drug coupons toward deductibles, increasing patients’ out-of-pocket costs by thousands of dollars.<sup>4</sup> Home UV units can cost the payer 90+% less than biologic treatments.<sup>5</sup>

“A cost-analysis study published in 2010 reported the annual cost of biologics... ranged from \$23,538 to \$27,557... Newer agents such as ustekinumab (90 mg) and apremilast (30 mg twice daily) are estimated to have an annual cost of \$53,884 and \$22,000 respectively.”

- Lim, Henry W., et al. “Phototherapy in dermatology: A call to action.” *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*. 2015.

1. Stewart, Sarah L. “Pros and cons of phototherapy.” National Psoriasis Foundation. July 12, 2018.

2. Hainer, Ray. “Understanding the risks of immunosuppressive drugs.” Health.com. February 29, 2016.

3. Lim, Henry W., et al. “Phototherapy in dermatology: A call to action.” *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology*. 2015.

4. “Copay accumulator policies and patients: What’s at Stake?” American Academy of Dermatology.

5. Hyde, Kimberly, et. Al. “Psoriasis Treatment Cost Comparison: Biologics Versus Home Phototherapy.” *The American Journal of Pharmacy Benefits*. January / February 2018.