

New England Dermatology & Laser Center
3455 Main Street, Suite 5
Springfield, MA 01107
(413) 733-9600
www.nedlc.com

FRAXEL LASER TREATMENT: PATIENT INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

Fraxel is one of the newest laser technologies and is revolutionizing the treatment of fine lines and wrinkles, acne scarring and facial discoloration including previously treatment-resistant facial pigmentary problems and melasma. It also improves the texture and tone of the skin. Lasers employ specific wavelengths of light to target certain elements in the skin. The Fraxel technology involves a pixel-like dot matrix approach to treatment. This method leaves intervening areas of skin that have not been treated and allows for more rapid healing than other conventional technologies. Unlike many other lasers where the ideal candidates are patients who have very light skin, this device can be used on all skin color types. Typically, several treatments are required at monthly intervals or longer to obtain improvement.

Fraxel treatment is performed using topical anesthesia in the doctor's office. A facial treatment is completed in about 30 minutes. While responses vary from patient to patient and from treatment to treatment, results are typically achieved in an average of 3 to 6 treatment sessions spaced at about 4 weeks apart or longer.

All laser procedures carry some degree of risk. The most common expected side effect of this treatment is temporary redness, swelling, and discomfort of the treated site. Risks include pinpoint bleeding, infection, acne flares, skin discoloration and scarring are possible but uncommon. Facial skin discoloration is usually temporary, lasting weeks to months, but could be permanent. Careful adherence to all postoperative instructions, including strict sunscreen use and sun avoidance, will minimize the risk for complications. Multiple treatment sessions are usually needed to achieve desired results. The results of any one treatment may not be apparent for 4-6 weeks; at that time, continued treatment may be performed to try to obtain additional improvement. Unfortunately, no assurances or guarantees can be given as to your response to treatment.

Preoperative Instructions:

- Tanning, whether it be with natural sunlight, indoor light, or self-tanning products, is not recommended at any time, but especially 6 weeks before treatment, between treatments, and for at least 6 weeks after your last treatment.
- Sunscreens/sunblocks with an SPF of 30 and ingredients that block both UVA and UVB light should be worn prior to and after your treatment to maximize your results and to minimize complications such as skin darkening from laser treatment.
- You should not apply any creams, lotions, moisturizers, makeup, topically prescribed medications, or other products to your skin on the day of treatment.
- If you are pregnant, breast-feeding, or trying to become pregnant, please alert your physician, as you are not a candidate at this time.
- If your skin has a tendency to turn dark in areas of minor cuts, abrasions or scars, please talk to your doctor about starting a bleaching regimen before your treatments begin to minimize the risk of skin darkening with the laser treatment. This bleaching regimen should be restarted after each treatment, once your skin heals, along with sunblock for 6 weeks.
- Occasionally, patients who are prone to developing cold sores around the mouth may develop cold sores following laser treatment. Individuals who are so prone should take an antiviral medication before treatment on the face. If you have had a history of cold sores, please let your physician know at least one week PRIOR TO your treatment so that an antiviral medication can be prescribed. Also, please **RESCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT IF YOU HAVE A VISIBLE COLD SORE OR BACTERIAL INFECTION ON THE FACE AS YOU CANNOT BE TREATED UNTIL THE AREA IS COMPLETELY HEALED.**
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption and smoking to further aid in healing.
- If you have taken or are currently taking Accutane, Sotret, or any other isotretinoin medication, you must be off this medication for at least **TWELVE MONTHS** before treatment with the Fraxel laser to minimize the risk of poor wound healing and permanent scarring.
- ONE WEEK before treatment**, stop any abrasive scrubs or microdermabrasion treatments. Do not WAX during this time.
- TWO DAYS before treatment**: Please stop all use of glycolic acid containing products and retinoids (tretinoin, Retin A, Tazorac, Differin, Renova) and other "anti-aging" products.
- ONE DAY before treatment**, stay hydrated! Drinking plenty of water before, during, and after your treatment can aid in the healing process.
- This procedure can be uncomfortable unless you are pretreated with a topical anesthetic. We ask that you please **COME TO THE OFFICE ONE HOUR BEFORE YOUR SCHEDULED APPOINTMENT** to have topical anesthesia applied to reduce discomfort associated with treatment.
- If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call 413-733-9600 to cancel or reschedule. Patients will be charged for any missed appointment that is not cancelled at least 24 hours in advance.

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FRAXEL LASER TREATMENT: PATIENT INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS (CONTINUED)

What to expect during the procedure:

- The procedure takes about 20 to 30 minutes and is associated with a burning sensation. During this time, cold air is blown across the treatment area, which cools the skin and helps to relieve any discomfort.

What to expect after your treatment:

- **Swelling:** You will notice most of the swelling on the first morning after treatment, particularly under the eyes. Swelling usually lasts 2-3 days. To minimize the swelling, apply cool water compresses as instructed below and sleep elevated on as many pillows as you can tolerate.
- **Redness:** You can expect a sunburn-like reaction with redness after treatment. Most redness resolves during the first week after treatment, but a rosy “glow” can remain for several weeks.
- **Dry skin and peeling:** On about the third day, you may notice some fine peeling, flaking, or crusting of the skin, which is referred to as “bronzing”. You may notice a “sandpaper” texture develop. Do not pick or scratch at any of the treated areas as this can lead to scarring. As your skin peels over the next 3-7 days, a new layer of skin underneath will be revealed.
- **Raw skin:** If you develop areas of raw skin after treatment, keep them moist with Vaseline® or Aquaphor® ointment until the area heals over. You do not need to apply band-aids, but keep the areas moist and do not pick at them. They will heal very rapidly on their own. Once the area heals over, stop using the Vaseline® or Aquaphor® since continued use may result in clogged pores and breakouts.
- **Acneiform eruptions:** Breakouts from acne have been reported to occur after Fraxel laser treatment. If this occurs, topical or oral antibiotics may be required.
- The final results of any one treatment cannot be appreciated for at least 4-6 weeks. Several treatments are likely to be required to obtain a satisfactory result.
- Notify your physician if the side effects from your treatment become a problem for you.

How to care for your skin after treatment:

- ❑ **Cooling:** During the healing process, you are encouraged to use cool water compresses for 10-20 minutes every hour on the day of treatment until you go to bed. Do not apply ice or icepacks directly to your skin.
- ❑ **Skin care products:** Peeling and flaking are normal during the healing process. To prevent irritation and breakouts, all of your skin care products should be gentle, non-irritating, and non-clogging for the first week after Fraxel laser treatment. Examples of brands that offer gentle and inexpensive products that are ideal to use include: Cetaphil®, Neutrogena®, Dove®, and Aveeno®.
- ❑ **Sunscreen:** To minimize the risk of complications, please use a sunscreen that offers UVA and UVB protection with an SPF of at least 30. Look for a sunscreen that contains zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, mexoryl, or Parsol 1789. Avoid direct sunlight and wear sun-protective clothing to cover the treated area (i.e. a wide brimmed hat). Be sure to wear your sunscreen on a regular basis whenever you are outside to optimize and maintain your results.
- ❑ **Scrubs, toners, glycolic acid, and retinoids:** Your skin will be sensitive for the first week or so after treatment, so do not use products that will cause irritation during this time. Do not use abrasive scrubs, toners, or products that contain glycolic acids or retinoids (tretinoin, Retin-A, Tazorac, Differin, Renova, etc).
- ❑ **Bleaching creams:** Discontinue use of your bleaching cream while your skin is still healing and tender.
- ❑ **Makeup:** If makeup is applied, do not use makeup remover or cleanse harshly as this may injure the treated area. Resume your normal skin care regimen when your skin has fully healed.

COST AND PAYMENT POLICY: Since Fraxel laser treatment is considered cosmetic, you will be responsible for the cost of treatment. Full payment is due at the time of service. Unfortunately, credit cannot be extended. Please discuss the estimated cost of treatments prior to undergoing the procedure. If you have any questions, please make sure they are answered to your satisfaction.

We are pleased that you have chosen New England Dermatology & Laser Center for your skin care and we appreciate your confidence in us. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your treatment, please call us at (413) 733-9600.