

## **LASER TREATMENT OF VASCULAR LESIONS**

### **PREOPERATIVE INFORMATION:**

You have been diagnosed with a vascular lesion (spider vein, rosacea, telangiectasia, photodamage, hemangioma, or port-wine stain) that is made up of a network of blood vessels. These vessels are close to the skin surface, causing your skin to be colored pink, red, or purple. Several treatments, including surgery and skin grafting, sclerotherapy injections, electrosurgery, cryosurgery, and X-rays have been used to treat these types of lesions, with variable results. The following factors should be considered in your decision to undergo laser treatment:

1. Lasers can selectively destroy blood vessels, and they have been shown to treat vascular lesions effectively. Multiple laser treatments are usually necessary to remove a vascular lesion.
2. Most telangiectases, or spider veins, may need only 1 to 4 laser treatments, whereas port-wine stains require an average of 10 to 20 treatments or more for significant lightening.
3. The power of the laser must be individualized for each patient and repeated treatments over the same skin area every 6 to 8 weeks may be required.
4. The laser treatment is usually well tolerated. Laser safety is ensured by having you close your eyes and wear specially designed protective goggles during the procedure. Pulses of light are delivered via a handpiece that is held very close to the skin. With each pulse of light delivered, the machine makes a popping sound, and the skin feels as though it has been snapped by a rubber band. Patients have a tendency to flinch with the first pulse, more from being startled than from pain. Subsequent pulses are more readily tolerated. An injection or anesthetic cream can sometimes be used to block the discomfort if desired.
5. Immediately after the laser treatment, there is likely to be a purple bruise-like discoloration, which may subsequently blister and crust, followed by healing over the next 7 to 14 days. "Lighter" treatment settings can be used which will minimize bruising. However, at these lighter settings, more treatment sessions may be necessary to achieve the desired result. Occasionally, temporary discoloration may occur following treatment and persist for several months. It is important to avoid prolonged sunlight exposure and wear sunblock during this time. Be sure to take the postoperative course into consideration if you have any important upcoming social events. Results of laser treatment may take up to six weeks to be seen.
6. All surgical procedures carry some degree of risk, and laser surgery is no exception. Although side effects from this procedure are minimal, a small risk of the following can occur: skin lightening (hypopigmentation), skin darkening (hyperpigmentation), mottled discoloration, infection, pain, swelling, activation of cold sores, allergic reaction to ointment or other contactant, scarring, and lesion persistence despite treatment. Unfortunately, no assurances or guarantees can be given regarding an individual's response to laser therapy.

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### **PREOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS:**

- ❑ Please let your doctor know during the initial consultation if you have a history of seizures, cold sores or fever blisters or if you have used Accutane within the last 12 months.
- ❑ **YOUR LASER TREATMENT MAY NEED TO BE CANCELLED IF YOU ARE SUNTANNED IN THE AREA TO BE TREATED. THE INCREASED PIGMENT FROM A SUNTAN CAN BE ABSORBED BY THE LASER BEAM AND INCREASE THE RISK FOR COMPLICATIONS. IF YOU DO HAVE A SUNTAN, PLEASE SCHEDULE ANY TREATMENTS AFTER THE TAN HAS FADED.**
- ❑ 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.

### **POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS:**

After treatment, the area may be discolored and swollen. Following this, a blister and/or crust may form which can last 7-14 days. The treated area is extremely delicate and must be handled with care during this time. Your response to treatment may not be apparent for 4 to 6 weeks. At that time, further treatment may be performed to try to obtain additional improvement.

- ❑ To prevent or reduce swelling and discomfort, cool water compresses may be applied to the area. These may be applied for 10 minutes of every hour. Do not apply ice directly to the treated area.
- ❑ If you feel any discomfort (typically this does not last more than 6 hours), use acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not use aspirin or ibuprofen during the healing phase (1 to 2 weeks) as this can increase bruising.
- ❑ Use a mild, nonirritating soap such as Cetaphil to gently cleanse the treated areas. If a blister or crust has formed, apply Vaseline or Aquaphor healing ointment to the treated area. If the wound is oozing, apply a bandage (nonstick pad with tape); otherwise you may leave it open to the air. Repeat this procedure twice daily.
- ❑ Showers are permitted but prolonged hot baths are not advised for 1-2 weeks. Gently pat the treated area dry with a soft cloth. Do not rub with a towel or washcloth because the area is extremely delicate while healing.
- ❑ Do not rub, scratch or pick the treated area. If a crust develops, let the crust fall off on its own.
- ❑ Makeup and moisturizers may be applied as usual if crusting is not present. Otherwise, wait until the crusting has come off. If makeup is applied to cover up the bruising, do not use makeup remover or cleanse harshly while the skin is still healing as this may injure or abrade the treated area. Instead, let the makeup wear off on its own.
- ❑ Avoid sunlight exposure to the treated areas. Use a sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher for several months following treatment to avoid prolonged redness or pigmentary changes.
- ❑ Avoid swimming and contact sports while the skin is healing.

**COST AND PAYMENT POLICY:** Since the use of lasers to treat vascular lesions is usually 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. Your treatment may be more or less than the estimate depending on the number of laser pulses needed to treat your lesion. If you have any questions, please make sure they are answered to your satisfaction prior to your treatment.

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.