

Chicago Tribune

WEDNESDAY; APRIL 17, 2002

New hope for old stretch marks:

If one researcher's study on laser-treated stretch marks holds up, even the most bathing suit-phobic woman might consider hitting the beach.

At the annual conference of the American Society for Lasers in Surgery and Medicine in Atlanta last week, Dr. David J. Goldberg said he has found a way to make old stretch marks less noticeable.

Goldberg, director of laser research in the department of dermatology at Mt. Sinai School of Medicine in New York, said that in treatments on 35 test patients, the majority of whom were women, a specific type of laser restored natural pigmentation to white stretch marks.

Excimer lasers are FDA-approved in the treatment of vitiligo, the skin disease best publicized by Michael Jackson, as well as psoriasis. In vitiligo patients, the laser helps repigment areas of the skin that are lighter than others are.

At Mt. Sinai, Goldberg applied this same approach to patients with older, white stretch marks on thighs, upper arms and buttocks, test-

ing the laser on people with a variety of skin tones over a six-week period. Most patients had three to six treatments, each lasting five to 10 minutes. The stretch marks kept their revived color when patients were checked after six months.

"We looked at mature stretch marks because those are the ones that did not respond to anything else. There are [already] some other treatments for the younger, red stretch marks," Goldberg says.

In his small study, all the patients had some repigmentation in the stretch marks, which made them less noticeable, although the laser does not change texture, indentations or other annoying aspects of stretch marks caused by pregnancy, weight gain and growth spurts.

Goldberg says the laser is painless and had no side effects. He expects that other dermatologists will begin offering stretch mark treatments with Excimer lasers in the near future.

Treatments are expected to cost between \$250 and \$750.

-Margaret Littman