

Cutting-Edge Laser Technology: Winning the war against aging skin (Part 2)

Newer non-ablative laser skin remodeling represents the true "Lunchtime" procedure, offering patients a softening of lines and wrinkles with no down time. These revolutionary systems,

Including Photorejuvenation, Smoothbeam and the Cool Touch lasers, offer the slow, gradual, woundless laser method for skin rejuvenation. Remarkably, patients can now receive a series of treatments without any discernible outer skin wound. No anesthesia is required and the treatment feels as painless as a rubber band snapping on the skin.

A full-face treatment can often be performed in less than 20 minutes and the minimal post-laser pink color is easy to cover with minimal makeup. Optimal results are usually achieved from three to six sessions every two to four weeks, with improvement continuing for up to six months after the final treatment.

What is so unique about this procedure is its invisibility. The requisite new collagen-forming wound occurs much the same as with the previously described more aggressive laser systems. But in this case, the wound occurs below the skin where no one can see it. There is no visible disruption in the outer layer of skin. And the results of these new procedures have in some ways surpassed those of the earlier destructive treatments. We recently examined the newly formed collagen from this skin remodeling procedure and found some exciting results. The study published in the March 1999 edition of the Journal of Cutaneous Laser Therapy documents significant new collagen formation six months after treatment. At the April 2001

meeting of the American Society for Lasers in Medicine & Surgery, we presented the very first study documenting the efficiency of the Smoothbeam "Lunchtime" Laser. This is promising news in the arena of skincare, both for the client and the esthetics industry, with tremendous implications for the reversal of aging skin.

While some patients see less improvement from this kinder treatment than from the older laser procedures, a growing number of patients prefer a system that works gradually to soften wrinkles and allows them to return to work immediately after treatment. Some patients come in for treatment and then go out to dinner right after their laser rejuvenation. The limitation of this system is that it does not remove the outer layer of skin, which means it cannot remove age spots and freckles. However, there are other simple lasers that can gently remove liver spots and freckles that will be the subject of a future report.

Laser treatment also does not remove the deep facial lines of expression such as frown lines and crow's feet. Botox, a muscle softening substance that is injected into the facial muscles, can allow these lines to relax, diminish and sometimes disappear. Collagen replacement therapy can also be used to fill deep facial lines and scars, without the telltale signs of cosmetic surgery. (Collagen therapy is also used for enhancing the fullness of the lips.)

It is hard to imagine the older laser procedures being performed in a spa setting, since they often require sedation and always leave a bleeding

wound. But the newer gentler systems, with their ease of administration and invisible action, are the ideal addition to the spa type of environment. Lunchtime laser treatments are already being performed in spa settings by experienced physicians with excellent results. However, be sure the physician has notable experience in laser surgery. You must feel confident about his qualifications. Don't be shy. Ask for specifics, such as the following:

1. Where were you trained?
2. Did you learn laser procedures in an evening workshop?
3. Do you rent or own your own lasers?
4. How many different lasers do you use? Two or three? Twenty to twenty-five?
5. Have you published or lectured on lasers?
6. Can you provide names and photos of satisfied patients, as well as professional referrals?

In the wrong hands, laser surgery can lead to scarring, pigmentary changes and a host of unhappy complications. In the right hands, it can help us maintain an elegant and youthful appearance.