

LASER RESURFACING

If you are considering surgery we want you to be thoroughly informed about this procedure. Reading this information is the first step. However, a personal consultation with your surgeon is the best way to obtain any additional information you need.

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WHAT IS LASER RESURFACING?

Wrinkles will develop as we age due to the breakdown of supporting structures such as collagen and elastin fibres. Sun exposure, smoking and even facial expressions such as smiling, laughing and frowning, contribute to the formation of wrinkles. Laser resurfacing is a revolutionary new technology that is gentle on your skin and tough on your wrinkles.

This method has largely replaced the older (but still effective) dermabrasion and chemical peel or can be used in conjunction with these techniques of skin resurfacing. The laser has greater advantages over the older method in accuracy and precision. The laser allows the skin to be vaporised in a controlled method, layer by layer, removing fine lines and wrinkles and stimulating the replacement of older, damaged skin with youthful, smoother skin. These lasers are so accurate that deeper wrinkles and scars can be selected and treated separately.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF LASER?

The laser seals all blood vessels and lymphatic vessels at the same time, leaving a clean dry surface to work from. A more uniform thickness of skin can be removed at once, due to precise control.

IS LASER RESURFACING RIGHT FOR ME?

Laser resurfacing is suitable for someone who has:

- Fine lines
- Wrinkles
- Crow's feet
- Lipstick lines
- Concern with the colour, texture or condition of their skin's surface.
- Freckles
- Acne or chicken pox scarring.

- Scarring due to an injury or accident.
- Sun damage to skin and lips
- Pigmentation spots due to age or sun
- Rhinophyma
- Bowen's Disease

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

Usually about 30 - 90 minutes, depending upon the areas to be resurfaced.

IS HOSPITALISATION REQUIRED?

Surgery can usually be performed as a day only procedure. You would be able to go home after a few hours.

DOES IT HURT?

Anaesthesia is required. Local anaesthesia can be used for smaller regions but Twilight anaesthesia is used for the whole face resurfacing.

AM I OLD ENOUGH TO HAVE RESURFACING?

Laser resurfacing is actually appropriate for people of almost any age group. Laser resurfacing can benefit even a teenager if there is significant acne scarring. Those in their twenties or thirties may benefit from more superficial laser resurfacing to improve skin texture and reproduce a healthier glow to the skin. Treating the skin superficially in this manner can replace the more expensive cosmetic creams.

AM I TOO OLD FOR IT TO HELP ME?

As mentioned above, laser resurfacing is beneficial for people of any age group. Older individuals who have multiple fine lines may actually benefit the most from laser skin resurfacing. As we age we also tend to develop more sun damage to our skin and this makes us more prone to developing skin cancers. Laser resurfacing removes the damaged upper layers of skin and allows it to heal with healthier skin, which needs to be protected from the harsh sunlight to maintain its smooth character. Because Erbium YAG laser treatments

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can be done with only local anaesthetic. There are very few medical contraindications to having it done.

WHAT SHOULD I EXPECT AFTER SURGERY?

Usually for the first week your skin will look grazed and scabs may form. This will be covered with Vaseline or sometimes with a dressing which will stay intact for 2 days. A crusty scab will try to form after this time.

Gentle skin washing with a mild soap and application of diluted hydrogen peroxide or antibiotic ointment is used to remove the yellowish crust which usually forms on the lasered area.

When the crust falls off, smooth, new skin will be healing underneath. This will be pinkish for a few months but will continue to fade. A camouflage make-up can be applied to the area to blend with the normal skin colour when the skin has healed, usually 10-14 days.

You can usually return to work within 10-14 days. For larger areas or deeper resurfacing, the area maybe very red. Three weeks off work may be required if you have an occupation which requires close personal contact. Following this, you will need to wear moisturiser and sun block SPF 30+ for six months.

WILL MY SKIN BE MORE SENSITIVE?

For the first three months certain creams and make-up may sting. The skin will also be very sensitive to sunlight and you will need to be careful about applying sunscreens.

IS THIS PERMANENT?

For scars, the unevenness will be improved and is permanent. It may never remove the scars completely but the aim is improvement. Secondary procedures are sometimes necessary to obtain further improvement. If you are sensible and keep out of the sun, wear sun protection and carry on with a maintenance skin care programme, your result should be permanent or improved.

HOW LONG DO I NEED OFF WORK?

Erbium YAG laser resurfacing may heal in as little as two to three days for more superficial treatments and between four and seven days for

deeper treatments. This allows the patient a much quicker recovery time and less time out of work or their other activities. CO2 laser resurfacing typically heals in seven to ten days and after that makeup can be worn. There is less time necessary for healing with Erbium YAG treatment than with CO2 laser treatment.

ARE THERE ANY COMPLICATIONS THAT MAY OCCUR?

Complications of Laser Therapy are uncommon but with any medical procedure, they can occur.

- **Scarring:** Scarring is rarely a problem.

It is more likely to occur if the patient has had previous dermabrasion or if the treatment goes too deeply. It can be treated with pressure dressings, gel sheeting and/or steroid injections.

- **Prolonged redness:** Redness will last from three weeks to 4-6 months.

- **Pigmentation changes:** Occasionally, patients may develop irregular hyperpigmentation (brown spots) during their healing interval and these can occur up to six months after surgery. It is more common in people with coloured skin. You will be provided with cosmetic products after surgery to help minimise this risk. Patients are encouraged to aggressively apply sun screen products as ultraviolet light exposure is counterproductive to achieving and maintaining a revitalised configuration for the skin.

This pigmentation usually resolves over several months if the patient avoids exposure to the sun. Appropriate postoperative preparation with Tretinoin and Hydroquinone can usually improve the problem. Many darker skinned patients have been treated in this way in The Plaza Clinic without complication.

Loss of pigmentation is a more serious complication, which can rarely occur (1 to 2% with the CO2 laser). Loss of pigmentation is less likely using the Erbium YAG Laser. Should the complication occur, it will be necessary to wear camouflage makeup.

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- **Telangiectasia** (fine vessels): A rare problem but recovery is quick. Further laser treatment may be required.
- **Millia** (small cysts): These are caused by blocked pores and glands and they usually disappear in 6-12 weeks but this is also rare. Sometimes these are manually removed.

INFECTION

General infection by bacteria or candida is uncommon and can be treated by the appropriate antibiotics and medicated creams.

Viral infection - the development of herpes (cold sores) after laser resurfacing is possible. If you have a history of frequent cold sores, you will be started on a course of antiviral antibiotic prior to resurfacing and this will have to be continued until your skin heals (5-7 days). If you have an

active cold sore then your operation will have to be postponed.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Should there be any questions regarding laser resurfacing, be sure they are answered in advance by the Doctor. Well meaning friends are not a good source of information. Find out everything before proceeding with the operation - a well informed patient is a happy one.

Finally, there can be no absolute guarantee with any surgery. Remember the realistic aim of this operation is improvement, not perfection.

Please note: The above information mentions only some of the benefits and complications of laser resurfacing. This information should not be regarded as a substitute for information and advice provided by the Doctor during consultation.

	Erbium YAG Laser	Carbon Dioxide Laser
Healing Time	2 to 7 days depending on depth of treatment	7 to 10 days depending on depth of treatment
Anaesthetic	Local with or without sedation	Usually local with sedation
Redness	2 to 3 weeks depending on depth of treatment	2 to 3 months depending on depth of treatment
Suitable skin types	Most skin types including Asian skin	Works best in type 1 and 2 skin (fair complexion)

It should be noted that the information above is intended as a general guide only. It is not intended to be comprehensive and recommendations may vary from patient to patient.

SHOULD I HAVE A FACELIFT INSTEAD?

The purpose of a facelift operation is to raise and tighten the facial skin, thereby eliminating or decreasing overhanging folds or lines. The standard facelift operation is effective in the neck, chin, cheek and temporal regions, that is the lower two thirds of the face and neck. The forehead and eyelid regions are not included in the standard operation and require separate procedures, which may be combined with it.

It is not possible to eliminate every fine wrinkle or furrow in a facelift procedure, especially the

“smokers” or “whistle” fine lines around the mouth that cause lipstick bleed. Laser resurfacing using the CO2, Erbium YAG laser or both lasers may be required as an adjunct to the rejuvenation procedures in order to achieve the maximum benefit.

Your Plastic Surgeon will advise you on what is the most appropriate treatment for your particular case at the first consultation. Patients who are good candidates for a facelift are likely to gain a very gratifying result.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS

The costs of Laser Resurfacing depend on a number of factors including

- The size of the area treated.
- The type of Laser used.

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- The type of anaesthetic used.
- The condition being treated,

but will generally be in the range of \$1,500 to \$6,000.

Some Health Care Funds will pay for Facility Fees irrespective of the condition being treated. Medicare will pay some benefits for the Laser treatment of severe acne scars and other facial scars. Generally, your insurance will not pay for this type of treatment if it is performed for purely cosmetic reasons.

You will be advised of all costs at the time of your first consultation.

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