

VASCULAR LASER TREATMENT

PATIENT INFORMATION

ND-YAG VASCULAR LASER:

The Nd-YAG laser is used to treat dilated small blood vessels (telangiectasia) and diffuse redness. Deeper and larger red and purple vascular lesions may also be treated, including lip venous lakes and birthmarks such as port wine stains, venous malformations and haemangiomas. The laser heats and destroys blood vessels with minimal damage to the surrounding skin. The causes of telangiectasia and redness include hereditary influences on complexion, sun damage, temperature extremes and acne rosacea. As these are usually ongoing problems, it is usual for them to return over a few years. The laser treatment may be repeated when necessary.

THE PROCEDURE:

Your face will be photographed preoperatively. It is important for your eyes to be shielded from the laser beam and they will be covered prior to starting treatment. The laser light is delivered in small circles which feel like a rubber band flick. The laser light is delivered through a cold tip but you will still be aware of some pain and heat. The strength of the laser may be reduced if you find it too uncomfortable. You can also use a numbing cream, please speak to your doctor.

POSTOPERATIVE COURSE:

The treated area will be red for 1-2 hours. If you develop purplish discolouration, this may last for 1-2 weeks.

If you have had lasering near the eyes, you may develop some swelling over 2-3 days which may lead to partial (rarely complete) closure of the eye. Using ice packs (or frozen pea packet in a clean tea towel) every hour for 10-15 minutes on the day of the procedure can reduce swelling. If you have had an internal eye shield, you will need to patch the eye for 4 hours and apply eye ointment (Refresh or equivalent lubricating eye ointment) twice daily for 3 days.

You may develop some small scabs or blisters over the 1-2 days following the laser treatment. These will heal completely over 7-10 days on the face. Do not pick at these scabs or apply bandaids to the area. You may wash gently and apply Vaseline frequently during this time. There may be some residual pinkness that fades over 2-3 months.

It is important to avoid sun exposure and use sun block for 3 months following the laser treatment to prevent uneven pigmentation (brown discolouration).

POST BIRTHMARK TREATMENT:

Birthmarks are usually treated more strongly so extra care is required post procedure. Shower and bathe the treated area as normal but gently pat the skin dry. Avoid shaving until the bruising and swelling has settled. A moisturiser (e.g. aqueous cream) is often soothing and reduces the likelihood of crusting. If crusting does occur, use Vaseline 3 times daily to reduce the risk of scarring.

If bruising is present, make up should be avoided for 1 week as removing it may produce damage to the skin which is fragile during this time. Avoid sports involving physical contact and do not take aspirin-containing compounds or anti-inflammatory medications until the bruising has faded.

The laser light is delivered in circles thus the first treatment may produce circles of lighter redness in a background of darker redness. Subsequent treatments will even out these obvious differences in colour but there may be some persistence of this patterned appearance. If the entire area is too large to be treated, there will be a line of demarcation between treated and untreated skin.

COMPLICATIONS:

Usually 3 treatments are required for telangiectasia, however problems may sometimes be very resistant and do not respond despite repeated treatments. For birthmarks, 4-6 treatments are usual and one usually gets improvement rather than resolution of the problem.

Scarring is a rare complication of laser treatment for telangiectasia but may occur in the stronger treatments needed for birthmarks. Changes in skin colour (lightening or darkening) may occur but will usually resolve with time and good sun protection. These problems are more common in olive or darker complexions.

If you have any questions or problems during the course of your treatment please call:

Adelaide Skin & Eye Centre 8211 0000 (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm)