



## Post Operative Instructions for Laser Resurfacing

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The laser procedure has the ability to produce the most dramatic results in skin rejuvenation. It also has one of the more formidable recoveries. This first week after laser skin resurfacing is challenging in terms of care. You will be swollen, covered with creams and not presentable to leave the house. This all begins to change at about day 5-6. After this the recovery is much easier. Just remember that the reward is at the end of the healing journey. I know this because I have had it done myself!

Laser resurfacing removes the outer layers of the skin. It is very important to manage this treatment to ensure proper healing. As with any burn, do not touch your face without washing hands. Bacterial and yeast infections can occur if you touch other body parts then touch your face.

The immediate post laser treatment consists of covering the lasered skin with Vaseline (Aquaphor or whatever the specific product you are instructed to use) and using cold packs for discomfort and swelling.

The best treatment to be comfortable is to apply cold compresses to the treated areas of the face. We recommend that you take a salad bowl and wash it well. Fill it with water and ice cubes and soak several wash cloths (or gauze) in the bowl and keep the bowl in the refrigerator. Apply the cold cloth to the face and this will ease the discomfort and burning and assist the swelling. When the cloth becomes warm, replace it with a new cold cloth. You can do this as much as you wish, but doing this will wash off the protective cream (Vaseline, etc), so remember to place a good coat of Vaseline (or whatever product our office recommends) over the treated areas when needed. For the first 5-6 days, you need to keep your face greasy and clean.



*Iced water soaked gauze or wash cloths will ease the discomfort and decrease swelling after skin resurfacing.*

Your face will ooze and swell for the first 48 hours and then will quickly improve. Generally the procedure is not extremely painful, and feels more like a sunburn. The first 48 hours is the most uncomfortable and the discomfort should quickly subside. Some of our patients do not require pain medication but having been through this, I would recommend taking a dose of your pain medicine about 1/2 hour before going to bed and shower and wash your face immediately before going to bed. By taking the pain medicine 1/2 hour prior to your shower, you will be more comfortable when washing as well as more ready to sleep. I also recommend taking a pain pill immediately upon awakening in the morning and taking a shower 1/2 hour after that. This way, you will be taking 2 showers per day and soaking and washing your face. Do

not use overly hot shower water and only use the towel to blot dry, do not rub your face. When washing your face in the shower you can use Cetaphil Gentle Cleanser (available at drug store), SkinMedica Post Laser Cleanser (available at our office), baby shampoo or shaving cream for sensitive skin. The goal is to soak and gently remove the dead skin and residue from the creams. You want to keep all the "crusts" soft and do not let them dry out. Your body will secrete serum in a normal response to the burn to the skin and this will tend to accumulate like a yellowish paste, especially around the lower lids and mouth. It is "nature's Band Aid" and help protects the healing skin. Although it looks unsightly, do not aggressively attempt to scrub it off. If the crusting is severe, soaking the area (usually lower lids) with hydrogen peroxide several minutes before your shower will help reduce them. If some of the yellowish paste comes off in the shower, that is fine and it will all come off soon, but if you remove it and the underlying skin bleeds, you are being too aggressive.

Your skin will begin to wash or peel off about the third or 4th day and your face will become red over the first few days and remain red for a week, will then gradually fade to pink, and then over the next several weeks will normalize. Some individuals progress quickly from red to pink, while others may take weeks or in some cases months. The pinkness can be covered with makeup as soon as the skin heals.

After all the crusts are gone and the skin is no longer oozing, the "greasy" creams will be stopped and you will begin using a hypoallergenic moisturizer. You may use Cetaphil Moisturizer, SkinMedica post laser TNS Cermide cream or other products if directed by our office. The moisturizer is applied generously to the lasered skin and since it is less greasy than Vaseline, you need to apply more moisturizer and use it more frequently. The whole idea is to hydrate the skin so it does not dry out during the healing process.

Overview
<b>Day 1</b> - Ice packs and "grease" ( SkinMedica Restorative Ointment recommended) or (Vaseline or Aquaphor)
<b>Day 2</b> - Begin showering twice a day and gently washing face along with prescribed ointment.
<b>Day 5 to 7</b> - Begin using moisturizer instead of ointments if skin is smooth, without crusts and not oozing.
<b>Day 7 to 14</b> - Continue with face washing and moisturizer, makeup can be applied when skin is smooth and pink, without crusting. Begin using sun screen by day 14 or earlier if outside or riding in car.

Your laser resurfacing is a safe and predictable procedure, but is reliant on multiple medications to prevent viral and bacterial infection, reduce swelling, control discomfort and assist in sleeping if necessary. It is imperative that you understand the prescription regimen and take the medicines as directed by Dr. Niamtu. Some of the medications are patient dependent. You may not receive all of them. Ask Dr. Niamtu if you have any questions.

**Valtrex** (anti-herpes medication given to all patients) – all laser patients are susceptible to herpes outbreak after their laser treatment. This medication is very important, as a herpes outbreak can cause permanent scarring. This medication is taken every 12 hours. We will have you begin this medication 48 hours before your laser surgery and continue taking them until they are gone.

**Keflex** (antibiotic medication given to all patients) – this medication will protect your healing skin from bacterial infection. You should not take this medication if you are allergic to penicillin. In the case of allergy, we will prescribe you a different antibiotic. The Keflex should be taken every 6 hours around the clock until gone. We prefer that you begin this medication 24 hours before your laser surgery.

**Prednisone** – this is an anti-swelling medication (only given to some patients) and will decrease your swelling after your surgery. The Prednisone should be started after surgery and 3 tablets every morning for 5 days.

**Discomfort Medication** (given to all patients)– you will receive a prescription for discomfort. You only need to take this medication if you have discomfort. If you wish, you may take Tylenol or Advil instead. If you have had other procedures such as eyelid surgery, facelift or brow lift with your laser, then do not take aspirin, Advil or any medication that increases bleeding. Tylenol is safe.

**Sleeping Medication** – (only given if needed) If you are having trouble with restful sleep, our office will provide a sleeping medication.

**Sunscreen** – Keeping sun off the face is very important (especially in the south) and important for proper healing. All patients should avoid direct sunlight for 4-6 weeks after surgery. Using sunscreen, sunglasses, and a wide brimmed hat are necessary. It is also important to protect your healing skin from sunlight that comes through car or office windows. Using a high quality sun screen with at least SPF 30 is recommended. This should be applied several times per day, every day during the healing period.

Medication	Usage	Necessary	Dose	Stop When
Valtrex	Anti-herpes	Yes	1 tab twice per day	Pills are gone
Keflex	Antibiotic	Yes	1 every 6 hours	Pills are gone
Prednisone	Anti-swelling	If needed	3 tabs every morning for 5 days	Pills are gone
Lortab	Discomfort	If needed	1tab every four to six hours if needed	Discomfort stops
Diazepam	Sleeping aid	If needed	1.5 hours before bed if needed	When sleeping normally

If you had laser your skin will be pink. Some patients will only be pink for several weeks and other patients will be pink for months. The pink skin will eventually resolve and is generally easily covered with makeup. Special concealer makeup products are available to cover pinkness. They are available from our office. About 30% of laser patients will experience hyperpigmentation after skin resurfacing. This usually occurs about 4 weeks after the procedure. This is a temporary blotchy tanning or darkening of the lasered skin. It is a reversible situation and generally quickly responds to bleaching creams. Any irritation to the healing skin such as hot air from hair dryers, car defrosts, sun exposure, and bright overhead lights can contribute to hyperpigmentation. Again, it is always temporary

### Post Laser Skin Care

If you have been using Retin-A, Obagi, SkinMedica or other skin care products before your laser, you need to stop them until your healing is complete. We like to have all patients on Retin-A and skin care products before and after their skin resurfacing. We generally begin the post laser skin care 4-6 weeks after the laser procedure. Your new skin is sensitive and requires gentle care. You will love the changes but it takes some time to get to that point.

Itching is a common symptom of newly healing skin. This can be controlled by using topical steroids (with permission from Dr. Niamtu), Benadryl, or white vinegar soaks. You can take a quart of tap water and add a tablespoon of white vinegar. Placing saturated wash clothes or paper towels with the vinegar solution will help the itching. If the itching is resistant, Dr. Niamtu can prescribe specific medications.

As always, call with any questions, problems, or concerns. Dr. Niamtu can be reached at 804-347-3504