

# Photorejuvenation: The Fountain of Youth?

Both the pleasures and stresses of life along with the simple passage of time can make our skin appear older. These signs of aging and sun-damage are unfortunately most visible on a person's face. The overall appearance of aging skin is primarily related to the quantitative effects of sun exposure with resultant UV damage to the structural components such as collagen and elastin fiber. Intrinsic factors, genetic factors and disease processes such as rosacea also play a large role.

In the past decade, a dramatic transformation of rejuvenation procedures has occurred. It began with dermabrasion and deep chemical peels progressing to laser resurfacing. All of these treatments while dealing with photo aging effectively required a significant amount of down time. Patients continued to demand good results without long down times, the associated pain and high costs. This is why we have seen over the last few years such a technological burst of lasers that are non-ablative. The first temporally was coblation, which was introduced slightly over a year ago. This laser while termed "non-ablative" did require the epidermis and part of the superficial dermis to be destroyed, but allowed much quicker healing and re-epithelialization. The down time was approximately seven to ten days. The Erbium laser, having variable energy available, could also be used in a similar way. The Nlite was the first truly ablative laser to be FDA approved for treatment of facial wrinkles. Photorejuvenation is another non-ablative process utilizing not a true laser, but rather a non-coherent intense pulsed light in a low energy to rejuvenate the skin.

The IPL system can be set to dif-

ferent wavelengths, thereby targeting either the dark sun damaged areas of the skin that have a heavy deposit of melanin, or hemoglobin, which will allow this same IPL system to target all of the superficial facial vessel and more obscure facial flushing, which happens with age. The IPL technology treats both the superficial and deeper skin layers, thereby rejuvenating the skin, while at the same time delivering beneficial thermal energy to deeper tissue. This secondary energy delivery causes increase collagen production and will be noted as a tightening and firming of the skin's surface.

The treatment is administered in a series of four to six procedures in three-week intervals. In most cases, the entire face is treated, and this treatment may also be used on the neck and chest or décolletage and hands. A cooling gel or blast is applied to the skin prior to the IPL hand piece being applied gently to the skin. No systemic anesthetic is required as the procedure is incredibly easy to tolerate. A slight sting may be felt and should this be too bothersome, a topical anesthetic cream can be applied. Treatment time takes about thirty minutes per session. Immediately after, the patient is able to return to work or home and resume normal activities.

A few days after each treatment, the patient will actually see the sun damaged areas of skin lift to the surface and slough off. This is not a peel, rather the dark areas alone flake off. The IPL system treats the areas of dilated blood vessels or flushing in a similar way, targeting only the areas of redness while causing no damage to the normal surrounding skin. After the series of treatments, there is a significant reduction of unwanted pigmentation



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and blotchiness in the skin. These results will be long lasting. In addition, the skin will be firmer and have a more consistent texture. Costs for this treatment vary, but in our office, a series of six treatments to the entire face average around \$1800.00. Either a qualified physician or a registered nurse that is certified as a laser technician should do these treatments. As with all lasers, the results vary with the skill of the operator. There is an immense learning curve for the fractionated with all lasers, but with this system especially, and we are fortunate in our office to have a nurse that has been an international instructor on this system for the past five years.

The IPL Photorejuvenation is just one more highly successful tool available in our arsenal to treat aging and photo damaged skin. It may not be the fountain of youth, but it makes aging a delightful alternative.

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