



LASER RESURFACING AFTER CARE

Laser resurfacing removes the outer layers of the skin so that the deep layer can be tightened. The procedure can have dramatic results, but only if cared for properly afterwards. It is very important to manage this treatment at home to ensure proper healing. There are treatments both before and after that actual laser resurfacing.

When sun-damaged or acne-scarred skin is treated with laser resurfacing procedures, the first week of post-operative care can be challenging. Managing cleansing and treating the skin takes a little diligence. Also, the skin may itch following treatment. It is imperative that you do not touch (or scratch) your face without washing hands. Bacterial and yeast infections can occur if you touch other body parts then touch your face. In addition, Dr. Mueller sometimes recommends wearing mittens at night when you sleep to avoid scratching your face unknowingly while you rest.

For these and other reasons, patients are given complete instructions concerning post-operative expectations and home-care. Here is a reminder of the important changes that may occur during the healing phase:

Swelling

Swelling occurs and is most intense between two and three days after resurfacing. For some, the swelling is most pronounced around the eyes and upper cheeks. At times, the eyes may be swollen almost shut for a day or so. This is an entirely natural phenomenon and is in no way detrimental to healing or harmful to you. We advise sleeping with an extra pillow to minimize swelling.

A Rosy Hue

When the skin has finished re-growing (usually in six to ten days), the skin takes on a rosy or pink color. This pinkness is the new fresh skin before it assumes its natural color tones. The pinkness fades over one to three weeks, but some people will note a degree of pinkness for up to a month. The rosy or pink tones can be easily camouflaged with appropriate foundation or make-up and will not be a problem with daily activities. This initial pinkness will increase with exercise, excitement and warm environments.

Itching and Discomfort

Some patients note itching during the healing phase. This is a totally normal result of re-growing or healing skin. However, increased PAIN after the first 48 hours is an important sign that there may be a problem. While rare, increased pain after 48 hours should be reported immediately to the physician or nurse.

Oozing

When the old skin is removed, and before the new fresh, smooth surface is restored, there is a measure of oozing and draining for the first two to four days. Most of the fluid is either clear or slightly yellow-tinged over a surface which is moist and light pink. Because we apply ointments to keep the skin moist, this drainage is entirely appropriate.



Residual Lines or Scars

Dr. Mueller has discussed the fact that not every scar or wrinkle line will be removed by our resurfacing procedure. This is because each scar and wrinkle is a separate problem and some are more resistant to treatment than others. While our patients enjoy a high degree of satisfaction after the resurfacing procedure, sometimes a second, lighter procedure is necessary as a touch-up. If you opted for a lighter laser procedure to decrease your down-time, then a second procedure is usually performed at about 2 – 3 months.

Darker Pigmentation

In spite of appropriate preparation, some darker-skinned patients may recognize a measure of deeper pigmentation after laser resurfacing. This darkening, which may occur at any of the resurfaced areas, will be treated and will fade over time. Lighter skinned patients may have the complication of hyper-pigmentation if they do not adhere to all instructions, wear sunscreen and stay out of the wind in the postoperative period.

Lighter Pigmentation

In spite of our efforts to test for this beforehand, a few patients may note over some months the occurrence of a lighter-than-normal spot in the resurfaced skin. This occurs because of an unusual response to the healing process. While rare, it can occur and remain permanently. These areas can be covered with make-up and usually blended satisfactorily to the surrounding skin.

Prolonged Sensitivity

The new skin may be more easily irritated or sensitive to topical agents, including sunscreens which were easily tolerated before resurfacing. This usually resolves.

Acne

During the first two or three months following resurfacing, some acne may occur. This is easily treated by Dr. Mueller.

Continued Improvement

Most patients find the skin continues to improve for at least one year after laser resurfacing as it continues to replace collagen and elastic tissue.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOUR LASER RESURFACING

- You have been scheduled for your preoperative Laser Resurfacing visit two weeks before your procedure. During this time the entire procedure will once again be covered in depth including all pre and post operative care. You will be given all of your prescriptions at that time.
- Please stop aspirin/Ibuprofen/Advil/Naproxen/Vitamin E/C/ Gingko Bilboa 10 days prior to the procedure. Please see a full list in our nutrition section.
- If we have prescribed topical medications such as Retin-A or hydroquinone, please remember to continue to use it. You need to use them for two weeks prior to your procedure.



WHAT TO EXPECT THE DAY OF SURGERY

- It is absolutely necessary that you arrange transportation for you to be driven to our facility for the procedure and once again driven home. You will be receiving medicine that will make it impossible for you to drive yourself. It is important for you to understand that you cannot drive the day of the procedure, nor can you take a taxi or public transportation.
- You will be having IV anesthesia. Please do not have anything to eat or drink for 6 hours.
- Please arrive thirty minutes before your scheduled procedure. This is required in order for appropriate preparations.
- Please wear a button-up shirt or top to the office the day of the procedure.
- Following photographs, Dr. Mueller will mark your face with a surgical pen.
- We will place anesthetic drops in your eyes, and then place protective eyeshields in your eyes

*Upon awaking, Dr. Mueller will place either Vaseline or Aquaphor on your skin followed by some cold compresses.

LASER RESURFACING CARE

The immediate post laser treatment consists of covering the lasered skin with Vaseline or Aquaphor and using cold packs for discomfort and swelling. You will feel as if you have a sunburn, so, the best treatment to be comfortable is to apply cold compresses to the treated areas of the face.

*You may apply ice packs as often as needed for the first 72 hours. You may use a ziplock bag with ice, or a bag of frozen peas in a ziplock bag. We recommend taking a large bowl of ice and water and soaking small towels, wringing them out and placing them on the face. When the towel becomes warm, replace it with a cold one. You can do this as often as you like. Just remember that the towels will remove the Vaseline or Aquaphor, so you will need to re-apply it. You will need to keep Vaseline or Aquaphor on the skin for about 5 – 6 days.

*Your skin will ooze for about 48 hours and this will also be the period that you are the most uncomfortable. You can shower that evening just prior to going to bed. You should keep the water luke-warm at best, as hot water will only increase the discomfort. Gently wash your face with your fingers only. Use Cetaphil, Physoderm or even baby shampoo to wash your skin. Take a pain pill ½ hour before your shower. This will make showering and sleeping much easier. You should then shower when you get up in the morning. As stated earlier, your skin may itch, so Dr. Mueller recommends wearing mittens at night to avoid scratching or touching your face. You will get some crusting on your skin as the cells may ooze. Do not aggressively try to remove these. Some will come off in the shower and the rest will resolve on its own. If you have significant crusting, say, around the eyes, you may loosen them by soaking them with a cotton swab and peroxide before taking a shower.



- Sleep and rest with your head and shoulders elevated on two or three pillows for the first 48 hours to help minimize the swelling that will occur around the eyes and cheeks.
- Do not scratch or pick at the crusting as this may cause scarring. Crusting will fall off as the laser areas heal. A small amount of vaseline or aquaphor should be kept on these areas until they heal. The skin may be fragile for the first month so that bruising or scratches may be seen.
- At least 4-6 times/ day, you will need to wash your face over the sink and re-apply the Vaseline or Aquaphor. These products can be kept in the refrigerator for cool application.
- After about the 4th or 5th day, your skin will start to peel off. The new skin underneath will be red and will last for about 6 – 7 days. The skin will then fade to pink and resolve over the next couple of weeks.
- On about days 6 – 7, you can change to a moisturizer only if there is no oozing, crusting and the skin is smooth. Products such as Cetaphil Moisturizer, Elta Light or one purchased at Dr. Mueller's practice are sufficient.
- You can start to wear make-up on Day #10. We recommend a green concealer under your foundation which counteracts the red / pink hue.
- Depending on the day of the week, your first appointment with Dr. Mueller will be either the 3rd or 4th day after the procedure. Your second appointment will be the tenth day after the procedure. Then at 1 month; 3 months; 6 months.