



Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)

Dr. Lowe's Facts about Laser Resurfacing (Erbium)

Will my skin look better?

Skin resurfacing can be performed using a variety of techniques that include: chemicals, dermabrasion, or lasers. Laser skin resurfacing involves often expensive technology, but it is usually very predictable and controlled. It is the predictability of laser resurfacing that makes it the most popular current non-surgical ways to rejuvenate the surface of skin. The vast majority of laser resurfacing procedures involve a highly controlled thermal effect. The laser peels the outer layer of the skin allowing healthier and younger looking skin to regenerate. This can improve skin texture, enlarged pores, superficial scars, and fine wrinkles.

What do you think about cosmetic facials, micro-peels, or micro-dermabrasion?

Minimally invasive procedures are associated with minimal results. These procedures are best performed at a spa and are usually quite safe when performed by a professional. Most patients report small improvements in skin texture at best. It is difficult to know how many minimal treatments it would take to equal a standard superficial laser peel, but it exceed 10-15 treatments in most cases. Dr. Lowe is committed to a true clinically effective resurfacing treatment such as laser resurfacing, and leaves the feel good treatments to the medical spas and aestheticians.

How effective are medically prescribed skin care regimens?

Medically prescribed skin care regimens are an important part of skin rejuvenation. Many skin lines provide modest improvement in the skin texture over time. Effective skin care regimens require patients to follow a strict protocol and exercise long-term patients in order to see noticeable results over 13-18 week period. A well-balanced skin care program provides several specific phases that include: prepare, correct, stimulate, and protect. The skin program must provide medically prescribed agents at an appropriate strength to truly rejuvenate the skin. Most programs include a skin lightener (Hydroquinone) and a skin stimulator (Tretinoin or Retin-A). Almost no over-the-counter skin line can provide effective dosing without a physician prescription or supervision. Skin care is an excellent adjunct to laser resurfacing. It can often prepare your skin for better laser results and maintenance. Your physician or health care professional can help you develop a skin care program that is right for you before or after laser resurfacing.

What is the best laser for skin resurfacing?

There are a number of lasers that are popular in skin resurfacing. The two most popular devices are CO2 and Erbium lasers. Each laser can be used to remove the out layer of the skin quite effectively. The CO2 laser is less popular because of an extended down time and recovery. It is associated with a higher risk of scarring and loss of natural skin color. The Erbium laser requires more treatments but the downtime is limited to 4-5 days in most situations. The cost of 4-5 Erbium laser treatments is usually less than just one treatment with a conventional CO2 laser.

Are there substantial risks related to laser skin resurfacing?

All laser procedures are associated with a certain amount of risk. The risks are often associated with a patient's skin color or consistency. Darker skin types are at a higher risk of scarring and hyperpigmentation (dark spots). All resurfacing procedures must be adjusted and formulated appropriately for skin types. The risk of laser resurfacing include: poor aesthetic results, bruising, swelling, crusting, hyperpigmentation, hypopigmentation, virus activation, and scarring. The deeper the laser treatment, the higher the risk. The deeper the laser treatment, the better the results in most cases. Laser resurfacing is always a balance between "pain & gain." Your board certified plastic surgeon or dermatologist can assist you with choosing the treatment that is right for you.

Is Erbium laser skin resurfacing painful or time consuming?

Erbium laser resurfacing procedures are usually performed in the office with topical numbing cream. A limited number of patients require sedation in advance with a medication by mouth. The skin surface is treated quickly with small burst of intense laser light. A complete treatment usually requires 10-15 minutes to complete. A cooling ointment is applied right after the procedure and for several days post-treatment. Most patients find the treatment to be uncomfortable but well tolerated even with 2-3 passes over the skin. Patient should expect to experience dry, red, peeling skin for 4-5 days in most cases, but results can vary with skin type. Most patients undergo multiple treatments at one to two month intervals with yearly maintenance.

How much improvement can I expect with Erbium skin resurfacing?

Erbium skin resurfacing seems to be a good balance between down-time and results. It is very popular because it can usually be worked into a person's busy schedule. It is not a treatment that will go unnoticed by friends and co-workers for the first several days. People will know that you had a treatment that looks much like a sun-burn after snow skiing. Even with this recovery, patients should only expect about a 10-15 percent improvement in skin texture and quality. Erbium resurfacing will in no way provide patients with an instant facelift regardless of what anyone may claim or advertise. Nevertheless, it will in most cases make your skin look younger and healthier. The manufacture recommends 2-3 treatment in a row for the best results.

How much does laser resurfacing cost?

Erbium resurfacing involves fractionated laser technology. There are a variety of laser manufacturers that sell these devices. The cost to purchase a fully functional laser device is about 80-100K. Dr. Lowe usually leases the lasers in his practice. This ensures in most cases that the lasers are properly maintained, a laser technician is on site, and that patients have access to current technology. In most cases, approximately half the laser fee goes to pay for the laser lease and the other is profit. The cost of laser resurfacing is determined by time, location, and complexity of treatment. It should be noted that our practice runs a number of specials on laser resurfacing throughout the year. The practice will be able to provide you with the cost of treatment after your professional consultation.

When do you offer laser resurfacing procedures?

All patients considering laser treatment are required to see Dr. Lowe in consultation prior to the laser treatment. Some patient may not schedule a laser treatment for several months after consultation depending on their schedule or time of year. Our practice provides laser procedures at set time points throughout the calendar month. We usually perform laser treatments on Wednesday mornings every 2-3 weeks depending on demand. We will often open extra laser treatment days as demand increases. Patients may check with our office for the laser dates that are currently available.

Can laser resurfacing be combined with other surgical or nonsurgical procedures?

Erbium laser resurfacing is often combined with other cosmetic treatments. Additional laser treatments such as Intense Pulse Light (IPL) used for age spots can be added on the day of treatment without much trouble. Other lasers such as the V-Beam (PDL) can often be added to limited areas without substantial additional risk. Many patients undergo BOTOX application on the same day as laser treatment when scheduled in advance. However, more lengthy cosmetic procedures such as injectable fillers (i.e. Juvederm) usually cannot be performed on the same day due to time limitations or safety concerns. Laser treatments must be performed efficiently and properly on laser days to ensure the most cost effective and safe patient care. Patients who are interested in doing more than one cosmetic treatment on the day of laser resurfacing are encouraged to check with our office in advance.

What is the downtime related to laser resurfacing?

In our practice, Erbium laser resurfacing is performed by the physician. Dr. Lowe is committed to providing patients with an effective and safe laser treatment. The downtime associated with the typical treatment is 4-5 days. The patients are often able to return to work the same day or the day after as long as they are aware that the treatment will be obvious. Most patients are comfortable in public places after several days with full recovery by the fifth day. Every patient has different skin and different expectations or definitions about down-time. Patients should undergo laser resurfacing at least 2 weeks prior to a major event such as a wedding or anniversary. A patient may elect to have a more or less aggressive treatment based on their clinical or social situation. Dr. Lowe and our staff can provide you with further information about downtime and recovery during your laser consultation.

Is laser resurfacing right for me?

In most cases, erbium laser resurfacing is not something that a patient needs; it is something a patient wants. There is a financial and personal cost for patients who desire noticeable younger skin. There are a variety of options to rejuvenate the skin. These include skin care, Botox, Fillers, surgery, and skin resurfacing procedures to name just a few. Erbium laser resurfacing will provide modest results at a limited cost. The treatment regimen is not associated with undue risk in most cases. Most patients undergo more than one treatment in our practice which is a testament to its effectiveness. No cosmetic procedure is without risk or cost, but Erbium laser resurfacing is popular because it seems to provide an excellent balance between risk and benefits. Patients should carefully weigh the pros and cons of laser resurfacing before scheduling the procedure. Each patient is unique, a consultation with a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon or Dermatologist can help you determine what options best suite your situation and pocket book. Erbium laser resurfacing or other laser or light treatments is often the right thing for the right person. For further information check out our website or other helpful links at www.drjlowe.com

What are Dr. Lowe's take home points?

1. Laser treatment should be individualized based on patient's features, concerns, and expectations.
2. Understand risks (poor results, bruising, crusting, swelling, acne breakout, and scarring).
3. Erbium laser resurfacing will be noticeable for 3-5 days and longer in some cases.
4. Erbium laser resurfacing can be adjusted to increase or decrease recovery and results.
5. 2-3 treatments in a row are recommended for best results with yearly maintenance.
6. Superficial to moderate resurfacing is not as good as deep resurfacing or a surgical procedure.
7. Most patients tolerate Erbium resurfacing without difficulty with topical numbing cream.
8. Other procedures or lasers can be performed at the same time when scheduled in advance.
9. Medically prescribed skin care regimen will enhance clinical results.
10. Physician certification and safety matters when undergoing any true laser treatment.