



Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)

Dr. Lowe's Facts about Laser Stretch Mark or Scar Treatment

Will my skin look better?

Stretch mark or scar treatment can be performed using a variety of techniques that include: chemicals, dermabrasion, surgery, or lasers. Laser stretch mark or scar treatment involves often expensive technology, but it is usually very quick, predictable, and controlled. It is the limited recovery of laser that makes it the most popular current non-surgical ways to treat stretch marks or scars on the surface of skin. The vast majority of laser procedures involve a highly controlled thermal effect. Most lasers treat the outer layer of the skin allowing healthier skin to regenerate or color to decrease. This can improve skin texture and other discolorations of the skin with multiple treatments. These disorders are very difficult to treat effectively in most cases, and lasers may be the only reasonable or safe option available at this time.

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 stretch marks or scars at best. It is difficult to know how many minimal treatments it would take to equal a standard laser treatment, but it exceed 10-15 treatments in most cases. Dr. Lowe is committed to a true clinically effective treatment 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 or superficial scars over time. Effective skin care regimens require patients to follow a strict protocol and 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 scar treatments, but is ineffective for most stretch mark treatment. It can on occasion prepare your skin or 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 stretch marks or skin scarring?

There are a number of lasers that are popular in the treatment of stretch marks or superficial scars. The two most popular resurfacing 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. Another lasers often used to treat scars is the V-Beam (PDL) this laser is effective at improving deep red or thickened scars. Multiple lasers or often used to treat scars depending on the scars color, location, and consistency.

Are there substantial risks related to laser stretch marks and scar treatment?

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 laser scar treatments must be adjusted and formulated appropriately for skin types. The risk of laser scar treatment include: poor aesthetic results, bruising, swelling, crusting, hyperpigmentation, hypopigmentation, virus activation, and scarring. The more aggressive the laser treatment, the higher the risk. The deeper the laser treatment, the better the results in most cases. Laser

stretch mark and scar treatment 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 laser stretch mark or scar treatment painful or time consuming?

Laser 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 5-10 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.

How much improvement can I expect with Laser stretch mark or scar treatment?

Laser treatment for stretch marks or scars seems to be a good balance between down-time and results. It is popular because it can usually be worked into a person’s busy schedule. It is not a treatment that will usually go unnoticed by friends and co-workers depending on the location. People may 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 5-10 percent improvement in stretch marks or skin scars. Laser treatment will in no way provide patients with an instant result no matter what anyone may claim or advertise. Nevertheless, it will in most cases make stretch mark or scar look better over time. The manufactures recommend 3-5 treatments for the best results.

How much does laser stretch mark or scar treatment cost?

Laser resurfacing involves fractionated laser technology and V-Beam involves localized pulse dye 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 stretch mark or scar treatment is determined by time, location, and complexity of treatment. It should be noted that our practice runs a number of specials on laser treatments throughout the year. Dr. Lowe often discounts laser scar treatment for his previously established patients who he has operated on. On occasion, Dr. Lowe may want to just test the laser in one area for a small sitting fee. The practice will be able to provide you with the cost of treatment after your professional consultation.

When do you offer laser stretch mark or scar treatments?

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 stretch mark and scar treatments be combined with other nonsurgical procedures?

Stretch mark or scar laser treatments are 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 treatment are encouraged to check with our office in advance.

What is the downtime related to laser stretch mark or scar treatment?

In our practice, laser stretch mark or scar treatment 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 2-3 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 may be obvious. Most patients are comfortable in public places after several days with full recovery by the 3-5 day depending on the area. Every patient has different skin and different expectations or definitions about down-time. Patients should undergo laser treatment 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 stretch mark or scar treatment right for me?

In most cases, laser treatment 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 scar improvement. There are a variety of options to improve stretch marks or skin scars. These include skin care, surgery, resurfacing, and laser procedures to name just a few. Laser stretch mark and scar treatment 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 laser is popular because it seems to provide an excellent balance between risk and benefits. Patients should carefully weigh the pros and cons of laser 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. 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, burns, and scarring).
3. Laser treatment will be noticeable for 3-5 days and longer in some cases.
4. Laser treatment can be adjusted to increase or decrease recovery and results.
5. 3-5 treatments in a row are recommended for best results in most cases.
6. Superficial to moderate resurfacing is not as good as deep resurfacing or a surgical procedure.
7. Most tolerate laser stretch mark or scar treatment without difficulty with topical numbing cream.
8. Other procedures or lasers can be performed at the same time when scheduled in advance.
9. Stretch marks and scar treatment can be unpredictable but often laser treatment is the only option.
10. Physician certification and safety matters when undergoing any true laser treatment.