



Lowe Plastic Surgery (LPS)

Dr. Lowe's Facts about Intense Pulse Light (IPL)

Will my skin look better?

Intense pulse light (IPL) or photo-facials is used to treat color irregularities of the skin. These irregularities include red and brown background colors common in sun damaged or aged skin. IPL is not a true laser, but provides intense fluorescent light over a diffuse spectrum. IPL is an expensive technology, but it is usually safe and well controlled with very little downtime. The limited recovery is what makes IPL one of the most popular skin treatment devices. The vast majority of IPL involves treatment confined to one wavelength, but our practice offers different wavelengths for different skin types and problems. IPL can be used to treat color issues deep or superficial on the skin surface. IPL allows for healthier and younger looking skin because it takes away over time unsightly brown or red areas. Although this device does not improve skin texture or fine wrinkles, it can be combined with a number of different lasers to achieve a variety of pleasing cosmetic results.

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 color at best. It is difficult to know how many minimal treatments it would take to equal a standard IPL because these treatments alone rarely improve skin color. Dr. Lowe is committed to a true clinically effective IPL 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 color 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 IPL and laser resurfacing. It can often prepare your skin for better IPL 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 IPL treatment.

What is the best laser for to improve skin color such as age spots?

There are a number of devices that treat problems in skin color. The most popular device continues to be the IPL, because of its limited down-time and recovery. Other lasers can be used to address specific color concerns of the skin. V-Beam (PDL) is a laser that is highly effective at treating small blood vessels or deep red spots. This laser is less popular because of an extended down time and recovery. It is associated with a higher risk of residual brown spots. The ND-Yag laser is very effective at treating resistant brown spots but the downtime can exceed 10-14 days in some situations. The IPL or photo-facial is effective over time, but requires multiple treatments. Patients who do not respond well to 3-5 IPL treatments should consider other options.

Are there substantial risks related to IPL?

All skin 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 IPL procedures must be adjusted and formulated appropriately for skin types. The risk of IPL include: poor aesthetic results, bruising, swelling, crusting, burning, hyperpigmentation, hypopigmentation, virus activation, and scarring. Your physician will adjust the IPL device to treat colors based on skin color, location, and depth. IPL 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 IPL painful or time consuming?

IPL 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 entire skin surface is treated quickly with bursts of intense light. A complete treatment usually requires 10-15 minutes to complete. A cooling gel is applied before and after the procedure and for several days post-treatment. Most patients find the treatment to be uncomfortable but well tolerated even with 1-23 passes over the skin. Patient should expect to experience inflamed, red, and crusting skin for 1-3 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 IPL?

IPL 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 day. People will know that you had a treatment that looks much like a sun-burn. Even with this recovery, patients should only expect about a 10 percent improvement in skin color per treatment. IPL will in no way provide patients instant results regardless of what anyone may claim or advertise. Nevertheless, it will in most cases make your skin look younger and healthier. The manufacture recommends 3-5 treatments in a row for the best results.

How much does IPL cost?

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

When do you offer IPL treatments?

All patients considering IPL or laser treatment are required to see Dr. Lowe in consultation prior to the procedure. Some patient may not schedule a treatment for several months after consultation depending on their schedule or time of year. Our practice provides IPL & 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 IPL or laser treatment days as demand increases. Patients may check with our office for the dates that are currently available.

Can IPL be combined with other surgical or nonsurgical procedures?

IPL is often combined with other cosmetic treatments. Additional laser treatments such as Erbium resurfacing for skin texture or fine wrinkles 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 IPL 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. IPL must be performed efficiently and properly on designated 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 IPL are encouraged to check with our office in advance.

What is the downtime related to IPL?

In our practice, IPL is usually performed by the physician. Dr. Lowe is committed to providing patients with an effective and safe IPL treatment. The downtime associated with the typical treatment is 1-3 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 will be obvious. Most patients are comfortable in public places after 1 day with full recovery by the third day. Every patient has different skin and different expectations or definitions about down-time. Patients should undergo IPL 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 IPL or laser consultation.

Is IPL right for me?

In most cases, IPL is not something that a patient needs, it is something that a patient wants. There is a financial and personal cost for patients who desire noticeable improved skin color. There are a variety of options to improve aging skin. These include skin care, Botox, Fillers, surgery, and skin resurfacing procedures to name just a few. IPL 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 3-5 treatments in our practice which is a testament to its effectiveness. No cosmetic procedure is without risk or cost, but IPL is popular because it seems to provide an excellent balance between risk and benefits. Patients should carefully weigh the pros and cons of IPL 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. IP 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. IPL is not a laser, it is intense pulsed light used over a number of spectrum based on the situation.
2. IPL treatment should be individualized based on patient's features, concerns, and expectations.
3. Understand risks (poor results, crusting, swelling, redness, and scaring).
4. IPL will be noticeable for 1-2 days and longer in some cases.
5. IPL can be adjusted to increase or decrease recovery and results.
6. 3--5 treatments in a row are recommended for best results with yearly maintenance.
7. Other laser devices can provide quicker results for more money and longer downtimes.
8. Most patients tolerate IPL resurfacing without difficulty with topical numbing cream and gels.
9. Other procedures or lasers can be performed at the same time when scheduled in advance.
10. Medically prescribed skin care regimen will enhance clinical results.
11. Physician certification and safety matters when undergoing any IPL or laser treatment.