



Laser Resurfacing – Patient Care Guide

Congratulations on your laser treatment, an exciting step toward smoother, more radiant, youthful skin. Careful adherence to your post-treatment care will support proper healing and help you achieve the best and longest-lasting outcome.

Your Pre-Treatment Preparation

Smoking & Medications:

- **Avoid Accutane (isotretinoin) for at least 6 months prior to treatment.**
- **Inform your provider if you have a history of cold sores; if yes, you'll start antiviral medication 2 days before.**
- Avoid smoking 2 weeks before and after treatment.

One Month Before Laser Treatment

- Avoid sun exposure, tanning beds, and self-tanning products for 1 month and then 6 weeks after treatment.
- **Use mineral SPF 30+ sunscreen daily for 1 month prior to treatment and restart 1 week after treatment.**
- If recommended, darker skin tones will use hydroquinone twice daily for 4–6 weeks, stopping 1 week before laser treatments.

One Week Before Laser Treatment

- Stop tretinoin, retinol, glycolic acid, vitamin C, kojic acid, or other exfoliants 1 week before.
- Use only a gentle cleanser and moisturizer.

On the Day of Treatment

- Wear comfortable clothing, and remove jewelry or contact lenses.

What to Expect After Treatment

- **Warmth & Redness** – Skin will feel warm and look sunburned. Redness typically fades within a week, though mild pinkness can last several weeks depending on treatment depth.
- **Swelling** – Peaks within 48 hours (especially around the eyes) and may last up to a week.
- **Pinpoint Bleeding** – May appear in the first few days for some patients.
- **Oozing & Crusting** – Mild oozing for 1–2 days is normal. Keep skin clean and covered with occlusive ointment. Blisters may occur.
- **Texture Changes** – Skin may look bronzed or feel rough before peeling. This is part of normal healing and will smooth gradually.
- **Peeling & Flaking** – Starts around days 3–4 and can continue for up to a week. Do not pick or peel the skin.
- **Itching** – Itching is common; use cold compresses or an oral antihistamine (Claritin or Benadryl). Avoid scratching to prevent scarring. Do not use anti-itch cream on the face.

Necessary Supplies (Your Shopping List)

- ☐ White vinegar – Helps with itching and prevents infection (for vinegar soaks).
- ☐ Distilled water – Essential for post-treatment cleansing.
- ☐ Oral antihistamine – Helps manage itching and discomfort.
- ☐ Hypochlorous Acid Spray – Helps manage itching and discomfort.
- ☐ Antiviral prescription – Only if you have a history of cold sores.
- ☐ Mineral-based sunscreen (Zinc oxide-based SPF 30+ is preferred such as EltaMD UV Skin Recovery Broad Spectrum SPF 50 or Colorescience Total Protection™ No-Show™ Mineral Sunscreen SPF 50) – Protects healing skin from sun damage.
- ☐ Occlusive ointment – Choose from Aquaphor Baby, Vaseline, CeraVe Healing Ointment, Alastin Recovery Balm, or EltaMD Laser Balm Healing Ointment.
- ☐ Gentle facial cleanser – Use mild, hypoallergenic options like Neutrogena, Cetaphil, Aveeno, or Dove.
- ☐ Cotton swaps – for applying ointments
- ☐ Optional: Preservative-free eye drops

Essential Do's & Don'ts

- Avoid Getting **tap water on your face for 4 days** — use **distilled water only** for cleansing.
- Avoid **showers for the first 4 days**. Resume normal showers on Day 5.
- **Avoid direct contact with pets during the healing and sloughing phase and do not let them sleep on your bed.**
- Avoid direct sun exposure for 6 weeks – use SPF 30+ and protective clothing.
- Avoid excessive sweating, exercise, hot weather, or saunas for 2 weeks.
- Avoid pools or hot tubs for 3 weeks.
- Avoid abrasive scrubs, toners, glycolic acids, or retinol for 4 weeks.
- Do use clean towels, clean pillowcases, and ensure any surface (such as eyeglasses) that comes into contact with treated areas is freshly laundered or sanitized.
- Do ensure your hands are clean and sanitized before touching your face.
- Do use gentle skincare with hypoallergenic cleansers (Neutrogena, Cetaphil, Aveeno, Dove).
- Do apply a thick layer of occlusive ointment (Aquaphor Baby, Vaseline, EltaMD Laser Balm) to maintain moisture.
- Do sleep with your head elevated to reduce swelling.
- Do drink plenty of water to promote healing.
- Do continue antiviral medication if prescribed.

Post-Treatment Care Timeline

First 48 Hours

- To reduce swelling, apply cool compresses every hour for 15 minutes while awake for the first 48 hours, then at least 6 times daily in the next 2 days. Gauze or a clean towel in cold distilled water works well.
- Sleep with your head elevated on extra pillows and place a clean new towel over your pillowcase each night.
- Cleanse skin with vinegar soaks for 1 minute at a time, 4 times daily or more.
 - Keep this vinegar solution refrigerated: 1 tsp white vinegar + 1 cup distilled water.
 - Gauze or clean towel soaked in the solution and placed on the treated areas.
- Keep your skin continuously moisturized with an occlusive ointment, reapplying every few hours as needed.

- You may cleanse your face with a gentle, mild cleanser and distilled water after 24 hours.

Days 3–7

- Gently cleanse with a mild, hypoallergenic cleanser and distilled water until day 4, then you can switch to tap water on day 5.
- Continue applying a thin layer of occlusive ointment to treated area(s).
 - You may also start using the Advanced Recovery Post Care Kit if provided to you which takes the place of the first two points above.
- Continue vinegar soaks for 1 minute at a time, 4 times a day or more.
- **Do not scrub or pick the peeling skin. This will scar your face**
- Once peeling subsides, apply broad spectrum mineral SPF 30+ sunscreen.
- Continue strict sun exposure avoidance protocol.

Days 8–10

- Reduce vinegar soaks to 2–4 times daily, keeping each soak to 1 minute.
- Continue applying a thin layer of occlusive ointment to treated area(s) (*or use the advanced recovery kit*)
- Apply a zinc-based mineral sunscreen (SPF 30+) daily and continue to avoid direct sun exposure. If sun exposure is unavoidable, reapply sunscreen frequently.

Days 11–20

- Discontinue vinegar soaks – you can stop when the skin appears smooth and intact – not raw or shiny. If in doubt, contact our office.
- Continue daily sunscreen use.
- Reintroduce Vitamin C serum.
- Light make-up can be applied if desired.

Days 21–28

- Resume a gentle skincare regimen if your skin tolerates it, no retinols, and use a daily sunscreen.
- For patients with darker skin tones, start pigmentation prevention treatments if advised. Some options include:
 - SkinCeuticals Advanced Pigment Corrector with 1% hydroxyphenoxy propionic acid, 0.5% ellagic acid, and 0.3% salicylic acid lotion.
 - SkinCeuticals Discoloration Defense with 3% tranexamic acid, 1% kojic acid, 5% niacinamide, and 5% hydroxyethylpiperazine ethane sulfonic acid serum.
- Alternative treatments for post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (PIH) may include:
 - Hydroquinone cream
 - Tranexamic acid 325mg once or twice daily by mouth

Weeks 4–6

- Gradually reintroduce topical retinol and glycolic acids if tolerated.
- Continue sun protection.
- Maintain a high-quality skincare regimen to protect your results and investment.

When to Contact Our Office at 843-790-7582

- ✓ Increasing pain, pus, or spreading redness (signs of infection)
 - ✓ Unusual blisters, severe itching, or prolonged swelling
 - ✓ Raw or oozing areas beyond 10 days
 - ✓ Any new or concerning symptoms