

Laser Treatments

Ask Dr. Mikell

Dr. Oswald Mikell, MD • Dermatology Associates of the Lowcountry American Board of Dermatology | American Board of Cosmetic Surgery | Physician of the Year 2008

Lasers have revolutionized dermatology, plastic and cosmetic surgery. Treatments are highly effective and are used for a number of purposes, including:

- Laser resurfacing--eliminating wrinkles, correcting acne scars and improving aging and sun-damaged skin
- Hair removal
- Pigmentation and tattoo removal
- Eliminating spider veins or "broken vessels"
- Removal of tumors and other growths

Q: Exactly what is a laser treatment?

A: A laser is a single-wave length source of high-energy light, which can be accurately focused to transmit that light on to a very small area. There are two basic types of lasers used for cosmetic purposes: ablative and nonablative. Ablative lasers actually vaporize the top layers of damaged skin, while nonablative lasers work deeper in the skin without removing or otherwise damaging the top layers. For this reason, there is no real patient downtime associated with cosmetic procedures that employ solely nonablative laser technology.

Q: What are the cosmetic benefits of laser treatments?

A: Skin resurfacing treatments, such as Fraxel, which is a nonablative treatment, can provide remarkable results - eliminating wrinkles around the eyes, acne scars, surgical scars, age spots/sunspots, and pre-Cancerous skin growths.

Q: I have unwanted facial hair – what is the treatment process?

A: Most people require a series of treatments over time. Some individuals will see very long term hair removal which may last for many years. Others may require maintenance treatments over time to maintain their degree of hair loss. It is truly impossible to determine in advance who will require how many treatments and how long the hair will remain gone. Laser hair removal works best in those with dark hairs on lighter skin; however, newer technologies have made this procedure safe and effective in those with darker skin.

Q: Is laser tattoo removal painful?

A: Most patients do not find the sessions to be very painful. In fact, the majority of patients equate the feeling of treatment with the laser to the mild discomfort of being "snapped by a rubber band." Local or topical anesthetic may be used, making the procedure much more comfortable.

Q: Will laser tattoo removal remove my tattoo completely?

A: There are some tattoos you probably want all the way gone, right? After all, the goal is to have no traces left behind of that ex-girlfriend's name. So, is it possible to completely eradicate that old ink, relegating (what was her name again?) to a distant memory? Possible, yes. Guaranteed, no.

Q: Is laser treatment a good option for spider vein removal?

A: Laser vein removal is an easy, fast, and effective way to treat superficial veins. It's most effective for small and medium size spider veins.

Q: How do I know if I am a candidate for laser treatment?

A: When considering treatment, you and your physician should discuss the trade-off between downtime and the desired results to determine the best option that fits your skin condition and lifestyle. Call Dermatology Associates of the Lowcountry and schedule a consult (843) 689-5259