

Ask the Plastic Surgeons

By Wendell Smoot, MD,
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Q. My complexion seems dull and uneven, plus I have sunspots and fine wrinkles developing as I age; what treatments would you recommend?

A. Fall is the perfect time to drop in for a consultation with a board certified plastic surgeon to see if you are a good candidate for a potential facial treatment to address the conditions you describe above. During this time of the year when the sun is less intense, a corrective laser treatment can revitalize the appearance of your face, neck and chest skin without the downtime of more invasive treatments. There are additional options such as laser collagen rejuvenation, which will also help diminish fine lines and improve skin on the facial area.

There are several types of laser treatments that have a range of intensities and recovery times. Perhaps the most popular and less-invasive laser treatment is what we call IPL, short for Intense Pulsed Light. IPL or "photo facial" treatments are pulses of visible light that are applied to the face, neck and or chest area that visibly improves the signs of sun damage and aging. The result of the treatment is a more even skin tone with less pigmentation (dark spots), redness and decreased blood vessels (rosacea, flushing). You can expect brown spots to remain darker for one to four weeks as they will gradually slough off. Treated skin has a natural, more youthful appearance.

Traditionally, you will be a good candidate for a photo facial if you have sun spots or sun damage and early facial aging, you suffer from rosacea and experience flushing and redness of the skin or if you want to improve your face, neck and or chest area but you don't want the downtime associated with laser resurfacing or chemical peels. The IPL laser can also be very effective in treating the signs of aging on the hands and can be scheduled in addition to a photo facial. Each IPL treatment takes 30 to 45 minutes each and depending on the desired results, it can take from one to five treatments. There is no anesthesia required, and a mild degree of discomfort can be expected. If you are more sensitive to pain, a topical anesthetic can be placed on the skin's surface for 15 to 30 minutes prior to the treatment.



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IPL treatments have several advantages over other laser resurfacing treatments (which are more intense) and chemical peels. These include the absence of downtime, potential scarring, minimal discomfort, ease of treatments and a high success rate of anticipated results.

Collagen rejuvenation is a noninvasive laser treatment that softens fine lines and wrinkles and leaves the skin looking younger and smoother by stimulating the production of natural collagen in the skin. Clinical trials have shown increased levels of collagen by up to 85 percent following laser collagen rejuvenation. During treatments, you will feel a mild tingling sensation as the laser light is absorbed, similar to feeling sunlight touching your face. Each treatment takes approximately 30 minutes and will not leave any visible signs on the skin surface. Results can last anywhere from one to four months, which varies among each individual.

John Smoot, MD, FACS, is Chief of Plastic Surgery at Scripps Memorial Hospital-La Jolla and Wendell Smoot, MD, FACS, has been voted by his peers as Top Doctor by San Diego Magazine for the past five consecutive years. Their plastic surgery practice was established 21 years ago and both physicians are individually board certified by the American Board of Plastic Surgery. Either physician can be reached at www.smoot-md.com or (858) 587-9850.