

# ADVANCED PRACTICE

AESTHETICS

612-895-5895

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## Spectrum Laser FAQs – IPL (Intense Pulsed Light)

- **What is IPL?** - Intense pulsed light (IPL) is a cosmetic skin treatment. People may use it to reduce the signs of aging, pigmentation, vasculature, reduce acne, or remove unwanted hair. An IPL treatment uses the power of broadband light to deliver pulses of intense light to penetrate the layers of the skin. Most patients describe experiencing a fast, pinching sensation during treatment, with minimal discomfort. There is no need for injections or incisions, giving patients the bonus of no downtime required.

- **What is unique about IPL?** - Unlike lasers, an IPL device sends out more than one wavelength of pulsating light. It can treat a range of skin conditions at the same time. After IPL, you may look younger because your skin tone is more even. While laser therapy uses a set wavelength depending on the procedure, intense pulsed light therapy uses multiple different wavelengths of light released in pulses. You can think of it as a strobe light passing along the skin. IPL isn't a focused beam like a laser. It instead is dispersed beams of light that work together. As the light penetrates down to the second layer of skin, it allows the cells to absorb its energy, heat up, and eventually destroy the pigmentation within the cell. This is how age spots, other discoloring blemishes, moles, birthmarks, and rosacea are diminished.

- **What are some indications for IPL?** - Skin tone, wrinkles, photoaging, skin rejuvenation, photo-facials, sun damaged skin, uneven pigmentation, scars, spider veins, vascular lesions, rosacea, acne, and hair reduction.

- **How does it work?** - IPL works on the same principles as laser in that light energy is absorbed by targeted cells (chromophores) with color in the skin. The light energy is converted to heat energy, which causes damage to the specific target area. IPL systems are different to lasers in that they deliver many wavelengths (or colors) in each pulse of light instead of just one wavelength. This technology use filters to refine the energy output for the treatment of certain areas. This enhances penetration without using excessive energy levels and enables targeting of specific chromophores (skin components that absorb light). The light heats cells in the skin and breaks them down. The body then removes the damaged tissue naturally.

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- **Does it help anti-aging / stimulate collagen?** - IPL will stimulate collagen growth by treating a deeper layer of skin, while improving texture, and reducing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

- **How does it feel?** - During the procedure, people may feel a pinching sensation. Some individuals have described this as a feeling like an elastic band being “snapped” on the skin. Sensation is moderate and very tolerable.

- **How long does a treatment take?** - Average treatment takes approximately 30-45 minutes.

- **What to expect?** - Your skin may be temperature sensitive for several days after treatment. Brown spots and freckles will appear darker while healing. It should take 4-6 weeks to see the full result and 2-3 treatments may be required to achieve an optimum result. The sessions are designed to provide no downtime however, occasionally you may find that your cheeks and under eye areas are slightly puffy after treatment. You may use cold compresses (5 minutes on and 10 minutes off) several times an hour to help ease both redness and swelling. Sleeping with your head elevated for the first night will also help decrease any swelling you may experience. Redness around the treated area for a few hours to days. Freckles and age spots may darken for three to seven days before starting to fade. Skin flaking for up to 10 days. Minor bruising that may last two weeks or less.

- **What to avoid after IPL** - No hot showers for 48 hours. For 2 days after a treatment avoid taking aspirin, Ibuprofen, drinking alcohol, heavy exertion and activities which may cause skin flushing. Avoid harsh topical products such as retinols and glycolic acid products for one week after each session. Avoid direct sunlight on the treated area and use a sunscreen with SPF 30 or greater for 4 to 6 weeks after treatment. No swimming for a week, especially in pools with chemicals such as chlorine. No strenuous exercise for 48 hours. You can hit the gym after about 2 days post-therapy. No hot tubs or Jacuzzis for 48 hours. Avoid activities that cause excessive perspiration for 24 hours. Do not pick at or remove any loosening or peeling skin. No electrolysis, facial waxing, or depilatories (hair removal products) for 14 days after a treatment.

- **Before your appointment** - It is imperative that you avoid significant sun exposure and tanning beds for at least 4 weeks prior to your treatment. Avoid applying self-tanner for 2 weeks prior to treatment. Avoid aspirin and Ibuprofen for one week prior to your

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treatment. Inform the doctor if you are taking blood thinners or regularly take aspirin or ibuprofen. Avoid alcohol for 2 days prior to treatment. Inform the doctor if have taken Accutane (oral acne medication) in the past year.

**- Pre-treatment, day of appointment** - If possible, arrive without creams or make-up on the treatment area. Otherwise please arrive 10 minutes prior to your appointment in order to clean the skin. Cleansing products are available for your convenience. Allow approximately 45 minutes for your appointment depending on the size of the treatment area. Pre-treatment photos will be taken. Just prior to treatment, you will be given eye shields or glasses to wear to protect your eyes.

**- Post-treatment** - Use mild cleansers and moisturizers. Avoid Aspirin, Ibuprofen, alcohol, heavy exertion and activities which may cause flushing for 2 days after treatment. Avoid harsh topical products such as retinols and glycolic acid products for one week after. Avoid direct sunlight on the treated area and use a broad-spectrum UVA/UVB sunscreen of SPF 30 or greater for 4 -6 weeks after your treatment. Anticipate some social downtime following your treatment.

**- Will I need to take time off?** - The short answer is no. Healing after an IPL treatment varies with the patient although in most cases takes less than a week and as little as a few hours to days. Immediately after the treatment you may notice some minor redness and swelling, like that of a sunburn. Ice packs or a cool washcloth can be used as needed. If treating freckles and other dark spots, you may experience dryness and flaking of the treated area. Some of the spots may appear darker, but they should slough off within a few days. You can apply makeup immediately after an IPL treatment if desired. Avoid heavy exertion and activities which may cause flushing of the skin for three days after treatment.

**- When will I see results? How long do they last?** – Pigment - It will take four to six weeks to see the full results from a single treatment, however you should see dark spots fade and slough off within a week. If you complete a series of treatments about one month apart, the maximum results will be visible in two to three months after the last treatment. Veins - The results of IPL begin to appear right after treatment and continue to improve over the next few days to weeks. It does take some time for veins to fully collapse and be reabsorbed by the body, so full results cannot be seen right away. If symptoms accompanied the spider veins, they are usually relieved immediately after treatment.



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- **How many treatments will I need?** - Depending on the indication of treatment, for best IPL results it is generally recommended that patients receive, on average, 3-4 treatments scheduled four weeks apart.

- **Are there any side effects?** - Mild complications of IPL include: Redness, swelling, light bruising, itching, peeling, and scabbing.

- **How much can a procedure cost?** - Treatment costs vary from \$350 - \$500 per session.