

Skin Typing Assessment

Name _____

Date _____

Client instructions: Circle answer and add up score at the end.

For Clinicians: Skin typing is one of many assessments used when determining the settings for lasers or other cosmetic treatments. Other factors to consider include: sun habits, time of the year, tendency for hyperpigmentation and response to previous treatments. We recommend skin typing clients one number higher as needed if there are concerns with skin typing score. Clinicians should encourage clients to fill out a skin typing form twice a year, once in the winter and in the summer. Skin of Color Aesthetics takes no liability of its content and is not meant to be used in place of a medical diagnosis. Review answers with patients for accuracy.

Genetic Disposition						
SCORE	0	1	2	3	4	Total
Eye Color	Light blue, grey, green	Blue, grey, or green	Blue	Dark Brown	Brown, Black	
Natural hair color	Red	Blond	Chestnut, dark blond	Dark Brown	Black	
Color of non-exposed skin?	Reddish	Very pale	Pale w/beige tint	Light Brown	Dark Brown	
Do you have freckles on non-exposed skin?	Many	Several	Few	Very few	None	

Score

Reaction to Sun Exposure						
SCORE	0	1	2	3	4	Total
What happens when you stay in the sun too long without sun protection?	Painful redness, blistering, peeling	Blistering followed by peeling	Burns sometimes followed by peeling	Rarely burns	Rarely burns or never had a sunburn***	
To what degree do you turn brown?	Hardly or not at all	Light color tan	Reasonable tan	Tans easily	Turns dark brown quickly	
Do you turn brown within several hours after sun exposure?	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always	
How does your face react to the sun without sun protection?	Very Sensitive	Sensitive	Normal	Very Resistant	Never have a problem	

***Traditional Fitzpatrick Skin Type assessment questionnaires previously stated "Never burns"- We encourage the change to "rarely burns or never had a sunburn" since darker skin types can burn from the sun with extended exposure.

Score

Tanning Habits						
SCORE	0	1	2	3	4	Total
When did you last expose your body to the sun or tanning booth/sunless tanner?	More than 3 months ago	2-3 months ago	1-2 months ago	Less than one month ago	Less than 2 weeks ago	
Did you expose the area to the area to be treated to the sun?	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Other	Always	

Score

Fitzpatrick Skin Type

0-7	I Pale skin, Blond/Red hair, light colored eyes, always burns, never tans.
8-16	II- Fair to light skin, Blond/Red/Brown hair, light colored eyes, burns easily, tans minimally.
17-25	III-Fair to beige skin, hazel or brown eyes, brown hair, burns moderately, tans moderately.
25-30	IV-Light to olive brown skin, dark eyes, dark hair, burns minimally, tans easily.
31-34	V-Brown skin, dark eyes, dark hair, skin rarely burns, tans profusely.
35-40	VI-Dark brown or black skin, dark hair dark eyes, rarely burns to, always to readily tans.

Total score from all boxes

The Fitzpatrick Skin Typing Scale

In 1975, Thomas B. Fitzpatrick introduced the Fitzpatrick Skin Typing scale to dermatology. The scale was developed to assess the propensity of the skin to burn during phototherapy (Ware, O.R. et al., 2020). The Fitzpatrick skin type (FST) is used to assess the clinical benefits and efficacy of cosmetic procedures, including laser hair removal, chemical peel and dermabrasion, tattoo removal, spray tanning, and laser resurfacing for acne scarring (Ware et al., 2020).

Although this scale has been used to determine the color of the skin, clinicians have mistakenly used the FST to describe race/ethnicity and/or constitutive skin of color. In the article Racial Limitations of Fitzpatrick Skin Typing, researchers strongly suggest that medical providers should be cognizant of combining race and ethnicity with FST (Ware et al., 2020). For example, some Asian clientele may appear as a Fitzpatrick skin type II due to the light appearance of their skin, this client may also be at a greater risk of sun damage. While those details pose similarities of a Fitzpatrick type II, you must also remember the client's genetic disposition before deciding a treatment plan. It is important to remember that just because some Asian clients may have light appearing skin, they are still considered non-white skin and should be treated appropriately and with caution.

We cannot rely on the skin typing scale alone, assess your client's sun habits, and history of post inflammatory hyperpigmentation (PIH), and ethnic origin. When using the scale, review all answers with clients to ensure proper skin typing, they may under or over type themselves.

RECOMMENDATION: Traditional Fitzpatrick Skin Type assessment questionnaires previously stated “Never burns” for skin types V and VI. We encourage the change to “rarely burns or never had a sunburn” because darker skin types can burn from the sun with extended exposure.

During our research of the FST, we recognized that there are different versions of this questionnaire with different wording and answers. It's important not to rely on it solely and to consider other factors. **WHEN IN DOUBT, TYPE CLIENTS ONE SCORE HIGHER.**

FITZPATRICK SCALE INACCURACIES:

1. Assumes a client must be one skin type, when in fact, they can be two different types depending on level of tanning
2. Mistakenly is used to determine client's ethnicity
3. Does not determine risk of hyperpigmentation
4. Only types 1-III have light eyes

Remember:

Skin Typing Scale = How much the skin burns when exposed to the sun/light

Reference:

Ware, R.O., Dawson, J.E., Shinohara, M.M., Taylor, S.C. (2020). Racial limitations of Fitzpatrick skin typing. The Skin of Color Society. Retrieved from <https://cdn.mdedge.com/files/s3fs-public/Ware%20SOC%20CT105002077.PDF>