

What is Sun spot and age spots removing with IPL?

74% of Canadian women claim to have an uneven skin tone and spots. Sun spots, liver spots, freckles and other unwanted pigmentation are frequently connected with skin aging and over exposure to the sun or UV and tanning beds. After the age of 40 the skin is less able to regenerate from sun exposure and age spots appear. Normally these age spots create no health threat, but they can be unpleasant and create a patchy, less youthful and bright look. Freckling and age spots are effectively faded or removed with Laser or Intense Pulse Light. All of these treatments are non-invasive, proper for both the face and body and will outcome in a more smooth skin tone. The light bypasses the outer layer of skin (the epidermis) and gently heats the cells in the deeper layer of skin (dermis). These cells, called fibroblasts, start to produce more collagen, which improves texture and fine wrinkles. IPL is a great treatment for sun spots, as long as you are otherwise an appropriate candidate for the procedure. Good candidates for this treatment are patients with a light to medium-dark skin tone and superficial hyper pigmentation. If you have a darker skin type, you may want to think about an alternative treatment such as a series of chemical peels and/or a topical prescription. Some machines have been designed to offer treatment parameters that are safer for darker skin, but they may decrease effectiveness or require more treatments, and there may still be an increased risk of complications, so be sure to discuss this issue with your provider if you fall into this category. IPL and laser treatments are most commonly used for:

- Lightening and removing "sun spots", "age spots", and brown blotches on the face, neck, chest, hands and other areas of the body
- Lightening and reducing redness, rosacea, dilated blood vessels and "broken" blood vessels on the face, neck and chest
- Helping to control flushing
- It also has a lesser effect of improving skin texture through collagen stimulation and improves pore size minimally by temporarily reducing the skin oil production.

How does IPL remove the pigmentary lesions?

Pigments absorb the light and convert the light energy to heat; then, the pigmentary lesions darken initially and fade over a week. Intense pulsed light Systems release precisely controlled strong pulses of filtered light that are absorbed by the melanin in freckles, sun spots or liver spots. Following treatment, the pigmented area turns darker and may crust. Over the following weeks the pigmented area will gradually flake away from the skin leaving little trace of the original mark. The excess pigments continue to fade after several weeks and more IPL sessions.

How many treatments are required?

Usually, a series of treatments are required in order to attain the best results, but the rate of success and patient satisfaction is high. It is essential to be aware that you must carefully avoid the sun and tanning when undergoing a series of IPL treatments. IPL treatments have been effective for sun damage pigmentation on the face, neck, hands, arms, and other areas. A few treatments are usually scheduled, with additional improvement noted each time. Sun protection is important, and some pigment may return gradually, and benefit from retreatment. When the IPL therapies are done appropriately, approximately a series of 3-5 treatments about one every three to six weeks, the benefits of treatments are achieved with little ache and minimal risk. Some cases of severe redness or brown spots require more than 5 treatments. Expect to see gradual clearing over time about 70% clearing based on the size of spots and skin type, but new spots may occur as expected, or as part of the basic sunspots development, demanding top-up treatments years later.

What should I do prior to my IPL treatment?

- Avoid self-tanners and excessive sun for 2-4 weeks before the treatment.
- Discontinue minocycline, tetracycline, doxycycline or Retin-A/Renova several days prior to each treatment.
- Avoid taking aspirin, ibuprofen, or Aleve one week prior to treatment unless medically indicated to help prevent bruising.
- Protect your improved skin with sunscreen every morning. Hats and sunglasses are also good protection from the sun.
- Book a Consultation session; prior to any treatment we will provide a full consultation. The consultation identifies your expectations and provides a complete explanation of the treatment. A health assessment form will be requested to fill to confirm you are a proper candidate for treatment, and if you wish a treatment, a written informed consent is obtained and a test patch is performed to confirm there are no adverse skin reactions to the light

How is the treatment carried out?

You require wearing protective goggles. The area may also be cooled to increase comfort during treatment. The light applicator is placed on the skin and a short pulse of light is released. The applicator is then moved to the neighboring area and the process is repeated until the entire area is treated. There may be mild discomfort during the treatment, but most patients tolerate it very easily. The first treatment is usually the "zingiest." As your skin begins to clear, the treatments usually become even more comfortable. Most patients describe the discomfort as moderate and acceptable, a slight stinging sensation, like the snapping of a rubber band, in the treated areas. No anesthesia is required. Sensations vary but most describe it as a very short hot pin prick. Treatments usually take 15-30 minutes, depending on the size of the treatment area. If there is any mild swelling, you might be given a cold pack to apply for five or ten minutes. Most centers will let you reapply foundation or concealer immediately after a treatment.

What should I expect after the treatment?

Redness and a slight warming sensation are normal after treatment. The skin of some patients becomes quite red immediately after treatment. However, most patients experience no side effects and the redness usually disappears within hours to a few days. A cooling pack will be applied to the skin to ease these symptoms. The lesions will darken after treatment and may appear more obvious at first, but gradually the marks will 'flake' away. After your first treatment, you can expect to see some redness, darkening of brown spots, and light swelling. These symptoms will resolve in several hours to one week. Makeup can be immediately applied, if desired. After the treatment, your skin will feel smoother and have a more even tone. A gradual decrease in overall redness, flushing, age spots, and fine lines will be more visible after each treatment.

What is the post treatment cares?

IPL procedures are designed to provide little down time. After the treatment, clients may feel a diffused stinging, similar to sunburn. In the days that follow the spots will become darker and look like a small graze. For freckles and age spots, the spots generally look darker for 3-7 days. Crusting can occur, which may last up to ten days. It is important that you do not try to pick off the pigmentation, but let it fall off naturally. This will happen after a few weeks, revealing clear skin. The lesions will then begin to clear and will generally be resolving at one month. It takes an average of 3-5 treatments within 3 week intervals to clear age spots. IPL makes the skin sensitive to the sunlight. Due to this you should wear SPF 30+ after any procedures using the IPL. Sunscreen also minimizes the formation of new pigmentation on the skin.

How long will the results last?

Based on how much sun exposure the skin gets after the treatments. If you are in the sun a lot and do not use sunscreen, the underlying issues, whether they are redness or brown spots, will return. But if you take good care of your skin and keep it protected from the sun, your skin will continue to look good with annual maintenance treatments. If you want to maintain collagen growth, we currently recommend a treatment every 6-12 months. Other conditions are more variable, once or twice a year may be needed. The good effects of the treatments won't last very long if you are getting much sun exposure. You can wear a sunscreen every morning and wear hats to protect your skin and decrease redness, brown spots, wrinkles, and skin cancers.

Are there any side effects?

The skin that surrounds the pigmented lesion may become red immediately after treatment. Most people experience no other side effects and the redness usually disappears without hours to a few days. Very rarely a small blister may form or the skin may become temporarily lighter or darker. The main side effects are mild, temporary swelling, redness, an accentuation of the brown spots, crusting, and an occasional bruise or small superficial blister (like a sunburn blister).

Who is NOT a good candidate for IPL?

- Sun bathers are not good for the IPL procedure. Avoid sun before or after.
- Individuals with a tan or with very dark skin.
- Patients taking Accutane should defer treatment until 6 months or longer after completion of Accutane therapy.
- Pregnant women should not undergo IPL treatment.
- IPL is not effective for treatment of deeper wrinkles and prominent skin sagging, and you need to use other techniques like laser face lifting