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Care before and after CO2 Laser Treatment

This page contains answers to frequently asked questions regarding your care after CO2 laser treatment.

This information sheet will help you to remember the instructions given to you after laser treatment.

What will I see when I look in the mirror?

Your skin will have an appearance ranging from pink and shiny to red and swollen. You will have some crusty drainage and clear red to yellow weeping. This is normal.

How will my face feel?

In general your face may feel mildly painful, tight and dry, and sometimes itchy. You will be given pain medication to take post procedure as needed. You will apply Aquaphor ointment to exposed areas for dryness 4-6 times a day. **Do Not** let your face dry out. You may take an over the counter antihistamine for itching as needed.

When can I shower or take a bath?

You normally can bathe or shower 24 hours after your procedure. You may gently cleanse your face with a gentle soap and water and pat dry, applying the Aquaphor after each washing.

When can I wear make-up?

In general, you should be able to wear hypoallergenic make-up 2 weeks after your procedure.

What can I do after surgery?

You should “take it easy” for several days following the procedure and gradually increase your activity as you feel more comfortable.

To decrease swelling, sleep with your head slightly elevated with 2 pillows the evening of surgery and for 3-5 days post-procedure.

Avoid bending, heavy lifting (over 10 lbs) and heavy exercise during this time and only gradually return to your normal routine. You can resume all of your normal activities about one week to ten days after treatment.

When can I drive?

You generally should be able to drive about 5 days after the procedure if you feel up to it.

You should not drive if you are still taking the prescribed pain medication.

When will I be able to return to work?

Depending on the type of work you do, you should be able to return to your job as soon as you are comfortable. If your job does not require heavy activity, you should be able to go back in 1-2 weeks. Your skin may still have a rough texture or may have a “pink, sun burned” appearance for 4-6 weeks.

How much pain will I have?

The most discomfort that you will have lasts 3-5 days, sometimes a little longer. As you feel more comfortable, your need for pain medication will be less.

What medications should I use?

Please let us know if you tend to develop cold sores. You may be given a prescription for Valtrex if you do tend to get cold sores

You will continue to take your Valacyclovir(Valtrex) for the next 7 days to minimize your risk of a cold sore arising after laser treatment.

I will prescribe a pain medication and sometimes something for nausea. Follow the directions on the bottle for their use. The pain medication will make you feel drowsy. Have someone assist you in your home and do not attempt to drive while you are taking the pain medication. A few days after your procedure most patients will find that Tylenol or Motrin alone will take care of the discomfort. Apply **Aquaphor ointment** to the entire affected area 4-6 times a day to keep moist. Do not let your face dry out.

Can I drink alcohol?

Do not drink alcohol for five days after your procedure.

When will I be seen in the office after the laser procedure?

You will be seen in the office **3-5 days after your procedure**. You will then be seen at 2 weeks and 1 month post procedure to monitor healing. Additional appointments may be necessary and will be determined by your healing.

What is my wound care?

Cleanse face with cool tap water and gentle cleanser. Use gauze 4x4 to gently wipe away crusting and scabbing that develops. **Do not scrub or abrade skin.**

After cleansing, liberally apply **Aquaphor** ointment to all areas 4-6 times for 14 days and then change to your regular moisturizing cream 4-6 times a day for approximately 2 weeks.

Do not allow your skin to become dry, moisturize frequently.

It is important to not have **any** sun exposure to treated area for 2 weeks post procedure. After 5 days, use a sunscreen each morning with SPF of 30 or greater for at least 3 months to treated area. We suggest daily sunscreen as your normal skin care routine.

How will I know if I am having a problem?

Urgent problems after CO2 laser do not occur frequently. There are complications that do need attention and can change your post-operative care:

If you have any of the problems listed below or other questions, contact my office.

Fluid filled blisters(vesicles), cold sores

-if you suspect you are developing any blisters(vesicles), or cold sores, even though you are taking the

Valacyclovir(Valtrex), contact the office, as this could impact your final result.

Infection is rare with laser treatment. It is normal to have clear red or yellow drainage for 5 days.

-signs of infection :

Increased temperature

Increased drainage, thick yellow drainage

Increased pain and redness

Medication reactions may occur with the drugs prescribed for you. If you develop a skin rash, Itching, vomiting, or diarrhea, stop taking your medication and contact my office 216-778-4450.