

OUR HOME + GARDEN ISSUE

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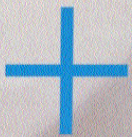
# LIFE

Luxury + Lifestyle + Design

April 2006

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"The problem with some of the non-ablative lasers is that it's not easy to see results," says Steven L. Davis, D.O., chief of plastic surgery at Kennedy Health System in Cherry Hill. "There are definitely effects at a cellular level, but they may not be visible by looking in the mirror."

Mitchell Chasin, M.D., medical director of Reflections Center for Skin and Body in Livingston, says, "The key to successful treatments is using all the devices available. Using multiple types of lasers to treat the same conditions or adding topical remedies in tandem with laser therapy yields the best results."

Before you spend the equivalent of Steven Spielberg's film budget on cosmetic laser procedures, take a look at what some of the state's top plastic surgeons and dermatologists say the newest technology can and cannot accomplish:

### ANTIAGING

"The treatment that has the greatest promise to treat aging skin is the Rhytec Portrait laser," Davis says. "It uses a nitrogen plasma on the skin's surface to separate old skin from younger skin below." The cost is high, about \$2,500, but the downtime is less than a week.

Chasin sees promise in Iclear XL-blue and infrared light and the Gentle Yag laser for wrinkle reduction and skin firming. Last year the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved the skin-tightening use of the Gentle Yag, which formerly was for hair removal only. Both require no recovery time and typically cost about \$500.

## Recovery can be less than a day with non-ablative procedures.

Somewhere between ablative and non-ablative procedures is Fraxel laser resurfacing. Introduced last year, it targets the skin in a microscopic grid pattern. The minuscule areas of skin in between the laser's pinpoint remain

between the laser's pinpoint remain unaffected and therefore help heal the rest of the skin so the entire surface looks younger and fuller, Chasin says. Sun damage, irregular pigment, and acne scars respond well to Fraxel resurfacing, he says. Treatments usually cost about \$1,500, and generally at least three are needed.

Newer non-ablative lasers, including Cooltouch, Smoothbeam, and intense pulsed light (IPL) therapy, such as Ellipse and Starlux, can promote new, healthy collagen growth without harming the skin, doctors say. The number of treatments needed varies; each costs about \$500.

### UNWANTED HAIR

Hair removal is the second most popular non-surgical cosmetic procedure, after Botox injections. "In the past, hair-removal lasers worked best on those with light complexions," explains David J. Goldberg, M.D., director of Skin Laser and Surgery Specialists of New York and New Jersey, and clinical professor of dermatology at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in Manhattan. "Now technology is available to treat dark skin as well as white hair—the lack of pigment had made that difficult to treat." Fine hair, or peach fuzz, still doesn't respond to any currently available treatments.

The advancements for hair removal include the Gentle Yag (which is able to target hair without disrupting the skin) and photodynamic therapy (a topical agent is applied to the skin and is absorbed by the hair's growth centers for the laser to target). "No one laser is appropriate for all skin and hair types," Chasin warns. "To perform laser hair removal safely and effectively, a practitioner needs several lasers for hair removal. A patient should confirm this before undergoing treatment."

### CELLULITE

"This is the newest and still-evolving area of lasers," Goldberg says. "The technology out now is a quantum leap from what was available 10 years ago, and I suspect we'll see even more development in effective treatments in the next five years."

### ROSACEA AND BROKEN BLOOD VESSELS

Treating blood vessels or veins typically used to involve a laser that bruised the skin. Now the Vbeam makes it possible to treat spider veins, rosacea (which produces red facial skin), vascular birthmarks, and warts, Chasin says. "The major change is the ability to deliver higher energy in a very safe manner, with no bruises," he says. "This is very exciting technology."

IPL therapy can treat spider veins and rosacea in two or three sessions. Large spider veins, however, still respond best to injections, Goldberg says.

Perhaps the most promising aspect of laser treatment is that any variety of cosmetic issues can be improved, you just need to find a qualified and experienced physician, Rosen says. "I break my work into five r's," says Chasin. "Relaxing and refilling wrinkles or depressions, remodeling below the surface to stimulate collagen, refining the surface, and refreshing a patient's color." So the options to improve your appearance are as varied as your choices at the multiplex—and in the right hands, there's no reason you shouldn't look like a Hollywood star.