

# Let there be light:

## All about laser treatments

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In aesthetics, medical lasers are devices that use precisely focused light sources to remove or treat tissues. Lasers are a key part of my clinical practice as they can safely and effectively target a broad range of skin conditions, from facial veins, acne and surgical scars, through to sun damage, stubborn pockets of fat, stretch marks, wrinkles and more.

Skin can also be revitalized and overall appearance improved by reducing wrinkles and fine lines.

But where do you start? The choice of treatments can seem overwhelming, with a range of devices all claiming similar benefits.

Here are my top tips if you are considering having a laser treatment:

### What does laser mean?

Laser stands for Light Amplification by the Stimulated Emission of Radiation.

### How do lasers work?

Medical lasers use precisely focused wavelengths to direct light energy to chemical targets in skin, known as chromophores. For instance, a laser wavelength may target melanin (pigment), water or hemoglobin (blood). As an example, a wavelength that targets melanin can target and remove or reduce freckles, brown spots, or age spots

### What is IPL?

Unlike lasers that generally work with a single wavelength of light, Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) uses many wavelengths of specifically filtered light. Both lasers and IPL devices are designed to treat specific unwanted targets in the skin like pigment from sun damage, broken blood vessels or hair.

### Does laser resurfacing hurt?

Patients typically describe the sensation during a laser treatment as like a rubber band snapping against the skin. This sensation will vary according to the area and depth of treatment.

A topical anaesthetic can be applied prior to treatment, to minimize any potential discomfort.

### Timing is key:

Whilst laser treatments can be undertaken all year round, the Autumn is typically the peak time as daylight hours start to shorten and we have less direct sun exposure.

### Qualifications and research:

Finding a qualified practitioner is vital to ensuring a safe treatment, for any aesthetic procedure. In the hands of a poorly trained individual, lasers can be ineffective and even dangerous.

Ask your practitioner about their qualifications, medical background, complication rate and experience with laser treatments.

### Consultation:

You must have an in-depth consultation with your practitioner who should record your medical history, any known allergies and discuss any safety concerns associated with treatment.

Knowledge and technical delivery are crucial but most important is your actual consultation, assessment and mutually agreed treatment plan.

### Sunscreen, sunscreen, sunscreen:

This should always be your starting point. Sun damage is the main cause of premature skin ageing and skin cancer. UV damage replaces your skin's natural glow with dryness, discoloration and, eventually, wrinkles. Use a minimum of SPF30 daily, reapplying regularly. SPF in make-up doesn't give the protection you need.