

INFORMATION SHEET: VASCULAR LESIONS

Before the development of pigment-specific lasers, most vascular (made of blood vessels) skin lesions could only be treated with surgical excision, often leading to scar formation. Certain lasers can now focus a green or red beam of light on the unwanted pigment in your skin and destroy it without damaging your normal skin. The first generation of these lasers proved very effective for removing facial blood vessels and red birthmarks and red moles, however they caused embarrassing swelling and bruising that could persist for 10 days. The laser that is currently used is a state of the art 940 nm laser made by Dornier. This laser targets deoxyhemoglobin and is very effective for blue veins in the lip, red moles and red facial veins. Larger birthmarks must still be treated with the 585nm laser that results in swelling and bruising.

The following factors should be considered in your decision to undergo laser treatment:

1. Multiple laser treatments are usually necessary (especially for large birthmarks, such as port wine stains and spider angiomas, which can require six or more laser treatments). Small blood vessels on the face usually require 1-2 treatments.
2. Treatments are usually scheduled at 6-to 8- week intervals.
3. The impact of the laser feels like a snap of a rubber band. Although most people find the sensation mildly uncomfortable without the need for any anesthesia, some patients with larger marks or who are more sensitive may require an anesthetic cream or injection before treatment.
4. Immediately after treatment, there may be a slight pinkness in the treated area and rarely a tissue paper appearing crust. However, this laser does not cause the bruising and swelling that the older vascular lasers did.
5. Fading of the treated lesions can continue for up to 6 months after laser treatment in some instances.
6. Although existing laser research and clinical evidence indicated that laser surgery is safe, there is no guarantee that laser treatment will be able to treat your condition completely.
7. Although the side effects of this procedure are minimal, there is a small risk that the following complications could occur:
 - Skin texture change
 - Dyspigmentation (skin lightening or darkening)
 - Infection or Incomplete removal of red lesion