



THE PLASTIC SURGERY CENTRE

## Informed Consent – Laser Resurfacing Procedures for the Skin

### Instructions

This is an informed consent document, which has been prepared to inform you about laser resurfacing treatment of the skin, its risks and alternative treatments.

It is important that you read this information carefully and completely.

### Introduction

Lasers have been used by plastic surgeons as a surgical instrument for many years. Laser energy can be used to cut, vaporize, or selectively remove skin and deeper tissues. There are many different methods for the surgical use of lasers.

Conditions such as wrinkles, sun-damaged skin, scars and some types of skin lesions/disorders may be treated with lasers. Certain surgical procedures may utilize the laser as a cutting instrument. In some situations, laser treatments may be performed in conjunction with other surgical procedures.

Skin treatment programs may be used both before and after laser resurfacing in order to enhance the results.

### Alternative Treatments

Alternative forms of treatment include not undergoing the proposed laser skin resurfacing procedure. Other forms of skin treatment (chemical peel) or surgical procedures (dermabrasion or excision surgery) may be substituted. In certain situations, laser resurfacing may offer a specific therapeutic advantage over other forms of treatment. Alternatively, laser treatment procedures in some situations may not represent a better alternative to other forms of surgery or skin treatments when indicated. Risks and potential complications are associated with alternative forms of treatment that involve skin treatment(s) or surgical procedures.

### Risks of Laser Resurfacing Procedures of the Skin

There are both risks and complications associated with all laser treatment procedures of the skin. Risks involve both items that specifically relate to the use of laser energy as a form of surgical therapy and to the specific procedure performed. An individual's choice to undergo a procedure is based on the comparison of risk to potential benefit. Although the majority of patients do not experience these complications, you should discuss each of them with Dr. Waslen to ensure you understand the risks, potential complications, and consequences of laser resurfacing.

**Infection** - Although infection following laser resurfacing is unusual, bacterial, fungal, and viral infections can occur. **Herpes simplex** virus infections around the mouth can occur following laser resurfacing. This applies to individuals with a past history of Herpes simplex virus infections as well as individuals with no known history of Herpes simplex virus infections around the mouth area. Specific medications must be prescribed and taken both prior to and following the laser treatment procedure in order to suppress an infection from the virus. Should any type of skin infection occur, additional treatment including antibiotics may be necessary.

**Scarring** - Although normal healing after the procedure is expected, abnormal scars may occur both in the skin and deeper tissues. In rare cases, keloid scars may result. Scars may be unattractive and of a different color than the surrounding tissues. Additional treatments may be necessary to treat any scarring.

**Burns** - Laser energy can produce burns. Adjacent structures, including the eyes, may be injured or permanently damaged by the laser beam. Burns are rare, yet represent the effect of heat produced within the tissues by laser energy. Additional treatment may be necessary to treat laser burns.

**Color Change** - Laser resurfacing may potentially change the natural color of your skin. Skin redness usually lasts 1-3 months and may occasionally last as long as 6 months following the procedure. There is the possibility of irregular color variations within the skin including areas that are both lighter and darker. A line of demarcation between the treated and untreated areas of the skin with laser resurfacing can occur.

**Accutane (Isotretinoin)**- Accutane is a prescription medication used to treat certain skin diseases. This drug may impair the ability of skin to heal following treatments or surgery for a variable amount of time even after the patient has discontinued it. Individuals who have taken this drug are advised to allow their skin adequate time to recover from Accutane before undergoing laser-resurfacing procedures.

**Fire** - Inflammable agents, surgical drapes and tubing, hair and clothing may be ignited by laser energy. Laser energy used in the presence of supplemental oxygen increases the potential hazard of fire. Some anesthetic gases may support combustion.

**Laser Smoke (Plume)** – Laser smoke is noxious to those who come into contact with it. This smoke may represent a possible biohazard.

**Bleeding** – Bleeding is rare following laser resurfacing. Should bleeding occur, additional treatment may be necessary.

**Skin Tissue Pathology** – Laser energy directed at skin lesions may potentially vaporize the lesion. Laboratory examination of the tissue specimen may not be possible.

**Visible Skin Patterns** – Laser treatment procedures may produce visible patterns within the skin. The occurrence of this is not predictable.

**Patient Failure to Follow Through** – Patient follow through following a laser skin resurfacing procedure is important. Postoperative instructions concerning appropriate restriction of activity, use of dressings and use of sun protection need to be followed in order to avoid potential complications, increased pain and unsatisfactory result. Dr. Waslen may recommend that you utilize a long-term skin care program to enhance healing following laser resurfacing.

**Distortion of Anatomic Features** – Laser skin resurfacing can produce distortion of the appearance of the eyelids, mouth and other visible anatomic landmarks. The occurrence of this is not predictable. Should this occur, additional treatment including surgery might be necessary.

**Damaged Skin** – Skin that has been previously treated with chemical peels or dermabrasion, damaged by burns, electrolysis (hair removal treatments), or radiation therapy may heal abnormally or slowly following treatment by lasers or other surgical techniques. The occurrence of this is not predictable. Additional treatment may be necessary.

**Unsatisfactory Result** – There is the possibility of an unsatisfactory result from these procedures. Laser resurfacing may result in visible deformities, skin slough, and loss of function and permanent color changes in the skin. You may be disappointed with the final result from laser resurfacing.

**Skin Cancer/Disorders** – Laser resurfacing may not offer protection against developing skin cancer or skin disorders in the future.

**Pain** – Very rarely, chronic pain may occur after laser resurfacing procedures.

**Allergic Reactions** – In rare cases, local allergies to tape, preservatives used in cosmetics or topical preparations have been reported following laser resurfacing. Systemic reactions, which are more serious, may result from drugs used during surgery and prescription medications. Allergic reactions may require additional treatment.

**Lack of Permanent Results** – Laser resurfacing may not completely improve or prevent future skin disorders, lesions or wrinkles. No technique can reverse the signs of skin aging. Additional surgical procedures may be necessary to further tighten loose skin.

**Delayed Healing** – It may take longer than anticipated for healing to occur following laser resurfacing. Skin healing may result in thin, easily injured skin. This is different from the normal redness of skin that normally follows laser resurfacing.

**Unknown Risks** – There is the possibility that additional risk factors of laser resurfacing may be discovered. The results of performing skin tightening surgery and laser resurfacing is unknown in terms of the combination effect of the two procedures and potential complications, depending on the area treated.

**Surgical Anesthesia** – Both local and general anesthesia involve risk. There is the possibility of complications, injury and even death from all forms of surgical anesthesia and sedation.

## **Additional Treatment/Surgery**

There are many variable conditions that influence the long-term result of laser resurfacing. Even though risks and complications occur infrequently, the risks cited are the ones that are particularly associated with these procedures. Other complications and risks can occur but are even more uncommon. Should complications occur, additional surgery or other treatments might be necessary. The practice of medicine and surgery is not an exact science. Although good results are expected, there is no guarantee or warranty expressed or implied on the results that may be obtained.

## **Financial Responsibilities**

The cost of laser resurfacing involves several charges for the service provided. This includes fees charged by your doctor, the cost of pre and post-operative skin care medications, surgical supplies, laser equipment and personnel, possible laboratory tests, and possible outpatient hospital charges, depending on where the procedure is performed. It is unlikely that cosmetic surgery costs would be covered by an insurance plan. Even if there is some insurance coverage, you will be responsible for necessary co-payments, deductibles and charges not covered. Additional costs may occur should complications develop from the surgery. Secondary surgery or hospital day surgery charges involved with revisionary surgery or treatments would also be your responsibility.

## **Disclaimer**

Informed-consent documents are used to communicate information about the proposed surgical treatment of a disease or condition along with disclosure of risks and alternative forms of treatment(s). The informed-consent process attempts to define principles of risk disclosure that should generally meet the needs of most patients in most circumstances.

However, informed consent documents should not be considered all inclusive in defining other methods of care and risks encountered. Dr. Waslen may provide you with additional or different information that is based on all the facts in your particular case and the state of medical knowledge.

Informed-consent documents are not intended to define or serve as the standard of medical care. Standards of medical care are determined on the basis of all of the facts involved in an individual case and are subject to change as scientific knowledge and technology advance and as practice patterns evolve.

It is important that you read the above information carefully and have all of your questions answered before signing your informed consent prior to surgery.