



## Post Care for CO2 Laser

The treated area will be red, swollen and tender. The swelling and pain usually lasts for 1-4 days. The skin may ooze for approximately 2-4 days. Redness may last for a couple of weeks. As the treated area is very delicate, proper wound care is essential for the best possible result.

**Please read and follow these directions:**

### Wound Care:

The basic principle is to keep the skin as moist as possible at all times to ensure proper healing. Any crusting you develop should **NOT** be "picked off." Crusts should be thoroughly soaked and gently rubbed off with a moist gauze pad as detailed below.

### **Step 1: Days 1-5: Open technique with ointments)**

It is very important to keep the skin covered with a generous layer of recovery ointment or Aquaphor ointment at all times during this phase of healing. You may cleanse the skin and keep it covered with the post procedure recovery kit as directed. It is also important to gently remove any crusts that form through the cold compresses detailed below.

#### **How to do cold compresses/vinegar soaks:**

*-you can do them for 20-30 minutes each time*

*-you can repeat every 1 to 4 hours, as desired*

1. Soaking with cool water is among the most important aspects of your postoperative care in this part of the healing process.
2. Cool water soaks should be performed frequently while you are awake starting when back at home. Please soak every 1-2 hours as tolerated the first 2 days then every 2-4 hours as long as you have oozing or bleeding.
3. Fill a large clean bowl with cold tap water and a few ice cubes. Add one tablespoon of white vinegar for every cup of water. Keep a clean towel or gauze nearby.
4. Take a damp, almost dripping wet, towel or gauze and apply it over the treated areas, replacing them before they dry (change every five minutes or so). An alternative is to leave the towel or gauze in place, dripping cold water repeatedly over gauze or towel.

5. After the compress is over, pat yourself dry with a clean soft towel and reapply recovery ointment or Aquaphor. There is no need to remove the ointment before your next cold/vinegar soak.

#### Scheduled regimen of care:

You are allowed to shower, letting lukewarm water stream over your face. Do not use any soap on your face. After letting the water stream over your face, shower and wash the rest of the body with warm water. The stream of water and steam should help loosen or remove any crusting. You may wash your hair with shampoo. Avoid getting shampoo on your face. Once you are done, pat your face dry and reapply the recovery ointment or Aquaphor.

After the shower, you may do a cold/vinegar soak, if desired. Pat your skin dry after and apply recovery ointment or Aquaphor.

At bedtime, apply the recovery ointment or Aquaphor liberally after your last soak. Make sure that the entire treated area is covered with ointment. Place an old towel over your pillow to prevent the ointment from getting on the pillow.

To protect the face and decrease swelling it is best to sleep on your back with your head elevated. Some people roll two small towels and place on either side of their face to prevent them from rolling over at night.

### **Step 2: Day 5 and onward: Lighter moisturizer and sun protection)**

After cleansing your face in the morning, apply sunscreen. You may also switch to a lighter moisturizer such as Cetaphil or Cerave Cream. The first two weeks, apply sunscreen at least three to four times a day. Afterward, daily use for at least three months is required. At this point the skin is still very sensitive and may not tolerate certain skin care products. Please call the office if you have any questions about the products you'd like to use on your face.

#### Things to look out for:

At this point the skin is still healing and you may notice the following side effects. A pink or red appearance is normal and reflects the healing process. It may take a few weeks for it to resolve. Some people notice new visible blood vessels that may appear. Meanwhile the skin may itch, feel tight and more prone to developing a rash. You may temporarily be more prone to developing acne or small cysts. Some patients may develop lighter or darker skin color in the treated area. Depending on how you heal, you may be prescribed certain medications to help minimize redness or darkening of the skin.

After approval of your physician, you may start wearing make-up 5 to 7 days after the laser surgery. It is important to remove the make-up very gently with a mild cleansing lotion (recommend Cetaphil Cleansing Lotion – over the counter). Please avoid scrubbing your skin.

### Important Points:

- Though the above regimen is repetitive and time consuming, the first week or so is critically important to a great result. Close follow-up helps us catch and correct potential complications early. Please keep your follow-up appointments.
- Should you experience any pain, discomfort, or stinging within the first three days take Tylenol (acetaminophen). Avoid aspirin and ibuprofen. Stronger pain medication can be prescribed. Pain should gradually improve a few days after laser resurfacing. If pain persists or worsens please let us know.
- If prescribed, take the full course of any antiviral or antibiotic medications. Please call us if you have any side effects.
- Swelling is expected during the first 24 to 48 hours, especially around the eyes. It is very important to keep the head upright or elevated with two to three pillows when resting. Also please avoid bending over or lifting more than 10 pounds for the first two weeks.
- If there are any unusual symptoms or signs suggesting infection (fever, increased swelling, blistering or increased redness in an area) please contact our office.
- Avoid swimming, hot tubs and strenuous exercise until you have physician approval.
- Use only the products we recommend during the healing phase. When washing your face, use only water. Do not use any facial cleansers, toners or soap unless instructed to do so.
- Avoid direct exposure to the sun following laser resurfacing. During the immediate postoperative period (steps 1 and 2), we recommend staying indoors during the day. Afterward a daily sunscreen should be used to intact skin for at least three months (if, not forever!). Staying indoors during peak daylight hours (10 a.m. to 3 p.m.) and wearing a hat can be very helpful.
- Because ointment may clog your pores, you may notice a temporary outbreak of pimples and/or tiny superficial cysts.
- Itching can occur in first three weeks after treatment. Most people have very good temporary relief with cool compresses (small towel soaked in cold water placed on the skin for 15 minutes as needed). If itching persists, over the counter Benadryl (25mg) taken at bedtime can be helpful. In some instances, your physician may give you a prescription anti-itch cream.
- A pink or red appearance is normal and reflects the healing process. It may take a few weeks for it to resolve.
- Depending on how you heal, you may be prescribed certain medications to help minimize redness or darkening of the skin.