

Partners in Health
Olina E. Harwer, M.D., F.A.A.F.P.

INFORMED CONSENT FOR
LASER TREATMENT PROCEDURES OF THE SKIN

INSTRUCTIONS: This is an informed consent document which has been prepared to help inform you about laser treatment procedures of skin, the risks associated with these procedures, and alternative treatments. It is important that you read this information carefully and completely. Please initial each page, indicating that you read and understand English, that you have read the page and finally sign the consent for the laser treatment as proposed by your physician.

Introduction: Lasers have been used by physicians 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 and cosmetic use of lasers. Conditions such as wrinkles, sun damaged skin, scars and certain types of skin lesions/disorders may be treated with a medical laser. Certain surgical procedures may use the laser as a cutting instrument. In some situations, laser treatments may be performed at the time of other surgical and/or cosmetic procedures. Skin treatment programs may be used both before and after laser skin treatments in order to enhance the results.

Alternative Treatment: Alternative forms of treatment include not undergoing the proposed laser skin treatment procedure. Other forms of skin treatment (chemical peel) or surgical procedures (dermabrasion or excision surgery) may be substituted. In certain situations, the laser 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 treatment, when indicated. Risks and potential complications are associated with alternative forms of treatment that involve skin treatments or surgical procedures.

Risks of Laser Treatment of Skin: There are both risks and complications associated with all laser treatment procedures of the skin. The risks involve both items that specifically relate to the use of laser energy as a form of surgical therapy as well as items related to the specific procedure performed. An individual's choice to undergo a laser procedure is based on the comparison of risk to potential benefits. Although the majority of patients do not experience these complications, you should discuss each of them with your physician to make sure you understand the risks, potential complications and consequences of laser skin treatments. The risks include local infection, prolonged redness and scarring. The treated area may heal either darker or lighter than the surrounding skin. This is usually temporary, but complications may occur.

Infection: Although infection following laser skin treatment is unusual, bacterial, fungal, and viral infections can occur. Herpes simplex virus infections around the mouth or other areas of the face can occur following a laser treatment. This applies to both individuals with a past history of Herpes simplex virus infections and to individuals with no known history of Herpes simplex virus infections in the mouth area. Specific medications may be prescribed and taken, both prior to and following the laser treatment procedure, in order to suppress a possible infection from this virus. Should any type of skin infection occur, additional treatments, 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 different color than the surrounding skin. Additional treatments may be needed to treat 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 they represent the effect of heat produced within the tissues by laser energy. Additional treatment may be necessary to treat laser burns.