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## IPL and Rosacea

### What is IPL?

IPL stands for intense pulsed light. The machine contains a flash lamp, this is an extremely bright light source. The shorter dangerous wavelengths are filtered out. A computer is used to set the length of the flash and calibrate the machine. IPL is used to treat a wide variety of conditions apart from Rosacea such as red birthmarks, pigmented skin lesions, thread veins and unwanted hair. There are several different manufacturers of IPL machines, all with different names. We use a Vasculight Quantum machine manufactured by Lumenis. This is an improvement on their earlier Photoderm machine.

### What does the treatment involve?

You will be asked to keep your face as pale as possible by avoiding sun exposure before and during your course of treatment. At your first visit you can discuss the pros and cons of treatment and a patch test can be performed to check the reaction of your skin. A week later the first full treatment is carried out. The whole of the affected area will be treated, except in men where the beard area is avoided. There is a feeling of heat during the treatment and your face will be redder for a short while afterwards. Cooling packs can be applied afterwards. You will need to wear goggles to protect your eyes from the intense light. A course of 4 – 6 treatments at 3-4 week intervals produces the best benefit. Improvement may continue for many weeks after the course has finished. Rosacea is a relapsing condition and this treatment improves the appearance but does not cure the Rosacea. If you have active inflammatory Rosacea then this will need to be controlled with medication before you can have IPL treatment.

### How does it work?

It is believed that the IPL has two actions that help in Rosacea. Firstly red thread veins absorb the light energy, this makes them hot. This damage encourages the body to reabsorb them, improving the appearance. Secondly the light energy warms the collagen fibres in the skin this stimulates new collagen and collagen remodelling, this improves the support of the small blood vessels which helps to delay the development of more thread veins.

### What are the possible unwanted effects?

IPL light is not thought to be cancer forming as it utilises visible and infra red light that is outside the ultraviolet range that causes sunburn, skin cancer, and aging of the skin. The flashes of bright light that are produced may damage the eyes so goggles have to be worn during the treatment. The treatment is generally well tolerated but some patients find it unpleasant. Exposure is limited to an extremely short flash that feels like the snap of a rubber band. A mild burning sensation can be felt for a while afterwards. Occasionally

there is some swelling that will subside in a day or two. The beard area is avoided in men as the treatment may cause some hair loss. Bruising is unlikely but if it occurs will settle in a few days. There is a chance that pigment changes may occur in the skin, either dark marks, hyperpigmentation, or pale marks, hypopigmentation. These are temporary and fade in 1 – 6 months. To help reduce the risk of this it is very important that sun exposure is avoided for 4 weeks before your treatment and throughout the course of treatment. Crusting and blistering may occur after the treatment, this is best left to heal undisturbed so as to reduce the risk of scarring. It is important that you follow any aftercare instructions carefully.

#### Who should not have IPL treatment?

Patients with light sensitivity should not have IPL treatment. Darker skin types are not suitable for light treatment because the intense light can damage the natural skin pigment. Its effects during pregnancy are unknown and it is safer to avoid the treatment when pregnant. You should not have IPL treatment if you have any suntan however mild. You should not have IPL treatment whilst taking Roaccutane (Isotretinoin) or for 12 months afterwards.

#### What alternative treatments are available?

The inflammatory part of rosacea causes spots, these should be treated with antibiotics, either by rubbing them on as a lotion or taking them by mouth as tablets. If the inflammatory type of rosacea is left untreated it will cause more thread veins. Lasers can be used for treating the thread veins and these are an alternative to IPL. The pulse dye laser has been used for many years for facial thread veins, it leaves dark bruises for a week or two. The KTP laser is also used this leaves less bruising but there is a slightly increased risk of scarring.

#### Prices

Initial assessment & test patch with consultant dermatologist £200

Facial treatments £150 - £350 per session