



I tried it: Laser Rejuvenation

I'd always had clear skin as a teenager, but I began to notice dark splotches speckling my cheeks and upper lip starting in my mid-twenties. My doctor diagnosed me with melasma, a.k.a. hyperpigmentation. The stubborn condition is thought to be caused by changing hormones, such as during pregnancy or when taking birth control pills, as well as sun exposure.

After unsuccessfully trying to diminish the embarrassing marks—from religiously applying sunscreen to slathering on lightening cream to getting glycolic peels—I finally visited Jody Levine, MD, co-director of Plastic Surgery & Dermatology of NYC PLLC in New York. After a twenty-minute consultation, she suggested profractional laser treatments. Levine explained this particular type of laser effectively destroys dark pigment and smoothes fine lines. The laser penetrates skin with thousands of tiny columns to stimulate new collagen growth, yet leaves surrounding tissue intact so you heal faster.

Eager to erase my spots, I returned hopeful (and more than a little apprehensive) the following week. A medical assistant prepped me by applying anesthetic cream to my entire face and mentioned the laser would feel like tiny rubber bands snapping at my skin. Numbness set in after about thirty minutes, and she instructed me to wear goggles that resembled those used in tanning salons. As Levine drew the laser across my face, the medical assistant aimed a hose blowing cool air at the area to ease the prickly, stinging sensation. Afterwards, my face looked and felt like I'd gotten sunburned, and I applied ice to keep the swelling down.

Two days later, my complexion was no longer red or swollen. Instead, it felt rough like sandpaper, but neither my family nor my co-workers noticed the tiny pockmarks I saw when I inspected my face in a magnifying mirror. The dark patches weren't gone, but they sloughed off gradually over the next week. When I went back two weeks later for a follow-up visit, my skin shone with more clarity and the fine lines I'd begun to notice near my eyes were no longer prominent. Levine said it may take as many as six treatments to fully improve melasma, but my spots continued to become less and less noticeable as much as a month post treatment. After years of hiding behind thick foundation, I finally walked outside makeup-free—and my new found confidence showed on my face.

—Holly C. Corbett