Laser Removal of Blood Vessels on the Face, Legs and Other Parts of the Body

Nd:YAG laser treatment is a safe, fast, gentle and effective method for removal of unwanted blood vessels. In just a few treatment sessions (in some cases only a single treatment session) using the gentle power of lasers, you can greatly improve the appearance of skin which is disfigured by unwanted blood vessels and broken capillaries.

How does Nd:YAG laser removal of unwanted blood vessels work?

The Nd:YAG laser is a noninvasive light therapy device specifically designed to eliminate undesired blood vessels from all parts of the body. The Nd:YAG laser generates a pulse of intense, concentrated light which is directed through a small, cooled hand piece which is gently applied to the treatment site.

The Nd:YAG laser can be used just about anywhere on the body, and usually requires no anesthesia or other treatment. Even sensitive areas such as the nose and cheeks can be treated easily and with minimal discomfort.

The system’s unique design allows us to customize treatment, according to the size and colour of your unwanted blood vessels, your skin colour, and location on the body.

What areas of the body can be treated?

All parts of the body can be treated with the Nd:YAG laser. In women, the most common areas for treatment are blood vessels on the thighs, lower legs and ankles. In men and women unwanted red blood vessels on the nose and face, including those associated with acne roacea and with sun damage, are successfully treated. Cherry hemangiomas, and spider hemangiomas (sometimes called "broken capillaries" or "broken blood vessels") on the face upper chest and other parts of the body are other commonly treated lesions.

What are the risks of laser removal of blood vessels?

Short-term side effects may include a reddening of the skin over the treated vessels or local swelling which typically lasts less than a day, although it may infrequently last a few days. Fourth generation, long wavelength 1064 lasers like CoolGlide® are less likely than older lasers to cause prolonged irritation, pigment changes or blistering. Occasionally there can be increased or decreased pigment in the treated area. This is seldom a major cosmetic problem, and generally resolves after several months. Even a single blister (rather like a tiny sunburn) is unusual, and generally will resolve within a week or two with some Vaseline or Aloe Vera.

Bruising can occur occasionally when treating vessels on the legs that are 2-3 mm in diameter. This is more of a nuisance than a major problem, and usually resolves within a few weeks without needing any treatment.

The light from the Nd:YAG Laser does not cause skin cancer. Is laser removal of blood vessels "permanent"?

"Permanent removal" means: "all the blood vessels are gone, forever."

There is no treatment for blood vessels (including laser) that can guarantee anybody "permanent blood vessel removal".

The most realistic description of the results after laser treatment is: "long term blood vessel reduction". Most people are very pleased with this degree of improvement, as long as they know that this is what to expect before they have laser removal of blood vessels.
Q&A

However, we do know that stable, long-term blood vessel reduction commonly lasts for at least two years, and some patients who had their last treatment many years ago are still enjoying a high degree of blood vessel reduction.

How many blood vessels will grow back, and how fast will they grow back?

The regrowth of blood vessels after treatment by laser is highly individual, and depends both on your genetic background and also on medical conditions like acne rosacea, medications you may be taking (like prednisone, for example) and on external factors like sun exposure (which can speed up the appearance of new vessels on the face and legs).

Support stockings are useful to retard the growth of large, deep vessels and varicose veins which are treated by sclerotherapy, but support stockings are unfortunately not useful to prevent the unsightly 1-3 mm superficial vessels on the legs which are treated with Nd:YAG.

How many treatments are needed?

The number of treatments will depend on:

- the desired degree of blood vessel reduction
- hormonal status
- area being treated
- medication (for example medicines like prednisone can increase superficial blood vessel growth)

Typically, one or two treatments are needed for facial vessels; and three or four treatments may be needed on the legs. Treatment can be done every 6 weeks on the face, and every 3 months on the legs. Cherry hemangiomas (red dots on the body) usually only require one or two treatments.

There is no safety limit on the number of treatments a person can have. People who have been partially treated with other types of blood vessel removing laser and/or injection sclerotherapy might in some cases need a smaller number of Nd:YAG laser treatments.

Which types of vessels respond best to treatment?

Blood vessels you can see with the naked eye tend to respond best to Nd:YAG laser treatment. Vessels so small that they can only be seen with magnification are difficult but not impossible to treat. Vessels larger than 3 mm in diameter, and vessels which are considerably elevated above the surface of the skin, respond better to injection sclerotherapy or surgical removal.

The color of the vessels can range from light pink to dark purple.

Pre-treatment instructions:

- Please try to minimize tanning for a week or two before treatment: a fresh tan can interfere a bit with the effectiveness of the CoolGlide® Laser treatment.
- Please do not wear makeup on the areas to be treated, or at least wear makeup that is easy to remove before treatment so that we can easily see all the vessels you would like to get rid of.

Post-treatment instructions:

- Redness often has faded greatly within a day or two. It would not be uncommon for the skin to be slightly drier that evening and to require more of your favourite moisturizer. The treated blood vessels may appear slightly more obvious for the next week or two, but this is seldom a cosmetic problem, and generally much less obvious than after injection sclerotherapy.
- Try to avoid tanning for a week or two after treatment, because occasionally the tan could be somewhat irregular (lighter and/or darker in the treated areas).
You do not need to purchase support stockings or special creams, and there is no special routine for you to follow.

Blistering or scaling after Nd:YAG laser removal of blood vessels is very rare, but usually resolve over a few days or a week with a bit of Vaseline or aloe vera cream several times a day. Please call us if this happens, or if you have any other problems or questions.

How much does it cost?

Fees are per treatment session, plus GST, and can be paid at the time of treatment with Interac, Visa, MasterCard, or cash. No cheques please.

Professional services provided by appointment only. The prices quoted are subject to change without notice. Dr. Searles and his team will be able to provide you with the current prices at the time of the consultation.

Dr. Searles does not charge a fee for aesthetic consultation. Consultations can usually be arranged within a week or two. Treatment may be scheduled for the same day as the consultation if there is a time slot that is convenient for you, or may be scheduled for a later date.

Consultations about eMatrix Sublative Rejuvenation can usually be arranged simply by calling our booking line at 780/424-4464 where our staff can take the time to discuss your wishes and options, and answer your questions. No referral is required.

Is laser treatment covered by insurance or Alberta Health?

Alberta Health will not pay for laser therapy, or for laser consultations. Most private insurance companies do not offer reimbursement for "cosmetic" procedures like laser therapy; however, consult your insurance carrier for more information.

The removal of unwanted blood vessels for the management of congenital, disease-related or drug-related telangiectasia may be covered by some private insurance plans. There will be an additional charge for any paperwork we have to do if you are trying to get reimbursed by your private insurance plan.

Is the cost of laser treatment a tax deductible medical expense?

Recent changes introduced in the 2010 Federal Budget no longer allows a tax deduction for procedures performed to enhance appearance.
About Dr. Searles...

Dr. Searles is dually certified by the Royal College of Physicians of Canada in both Internal Medicine and Dermatology. He has been honoured to be elected as a Fellow of the prestigious American College of Physicians. He is a member of numerous National and International medical organizations devoted to the discovery and application of new ideas and techniques for treating medical and esthetic skin conditions.

Dr. Searles is a Clinical Professor in Medicine at the University of Alberta, and is the Director of Resident Training for Dermatology.

Dr. Gordon Searles’ primary mission is to deliver the best care possible through the use of the latest advances in medical research and new technologies.

Getting to Know your Options through the Consultation Process

Aesthetic dermatology, laser services and healthy skincare are the most effective ways to enhance your natural beauty and to prevent further skin damage. Dr. Searles and his team of trained nursing staff and Certified Laser Technicians provide consultations for all cosmetic and laser procedures along with advanced skincare offered at our office.

A consultation includes a complete evaluation of your skin history, depicting your skin care concerns and goals, and a treatment and skincare regimen based on those areas evaluated. The treatment and skincare options will be described in-depth to you so that you understand all the necessary information for beginning the recommended regimen. This information includes, but is not limited to, description of the treatment, pre- and post-treatment protocols, risks and side effects, costs, and before and after examples.

If an area of concern is not treatable with the technology and therapies available at Searles Dermatology & Aesthetics, we will refer you to a qualified professional in that field.

The consultation is designed to provide you with all the information necessary for you to feel most comfortable in receiving the benefits of these treatments and skincare programs.