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Fact Sheet Stretch marks

How are stretchmarks caused?

Stretch marks, or 'striae', look like surface scars and can be pink or white in colour. When they first appear they can be a vivid red or purple colour and can sometimes look inflamed. Over time they will become sunken and white in colour. If examined under a microscope, the distribution of collagen and elastin fibres within the skin will clearly be different from that of normal skin.

How does the laser treatment work?

By using one particular type of laser, called a Pulsed Dye laser, the appearance of stretch marks may be improved, especially those stretch marks which are red or purple in colour. The medical practitioner performing treatment will trace the laser over the stretch mark. The laser energy is pulsed and with each pulse lasting less than one thousandth of a second, interacts selectively with the stretch mark without affecting the surrounding skin.

For red or purple stretch marks: -

The energy from the laser interacts with the enlarged blood vessels, which are causing the colouration. This releases heat damaging these large blood vessels. The purple or red colour is therefore much reduced and in most patients will virtually disappear, but a white stretch mark may remain.

For white stretch marks: →

Clinical trials have shown, treatment with the Pulsed Dye laser has a notable effect, under the microscope, on white and sunken stretch marks. The laser stimulates the formation of new connective tissue, which can lead to an improvement in the appearance of the unwanted marks. The extent to which this will improve the appearance of each stretch mark will vary and it is usually not possible to know with certainty, the likely outcome of treatment for each individual, until treatment has taken place. Some patients will notice improvement post treatment, but the mark is unlikely to disappear completely and the change may be mild, or not noticeable.

What will I expect to see after the treatment?

Immediately after treatment the treated stretch marks will usually turn a deep purple or black colour, rather like a thin bruise. This is a healthy sign that treatment is working. This bruising usually lasts for about two weeks, and as this fades, the discolouration of the stretch marks will fade too.

For the white stretch marks, the skin's response to treatment is more gradual and improvement may continue for several months, often up to a year, for the full effect to be noticeable. However, the bruising effect caused by the laser will usually fade within two weeks.

After laser treatment patients may bathe normally, but should avoid scrubbing or traumatising the treated area until the bruising effect has faded. Dressings are not necessary unless the area is rubbed by clothing. Patients should also avoid over exposure to the sun and sun beds. Use of a UVA-UVB sunblock of a minimum SPF 30 is strongly recommended for up to six months after treatment. Please note, after treatment some pigmentation may occur, particularly for those people with darker skins.

The additional use of tretinoin and topical vitamin C products have been proven to be advantageous and can be purchased in the clinics. These products can be discussed with the nurse practitioner at the clinic.

PRICE LIST

CONSULTATION AND TEST	CHF 250
MINOR TREATMENT SESSION	CHF 350
INTERMEDIATE TREATMENT SESSION	CHF 550
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For any further information please call us on 044 225 41 41