

SHAPE

Why Lasers and Light Treatments Are Really Good for Your Skin

Skin problem? Chances are there's a type of light that can fix it.

By Melanie Rud Chadwick | Dec 13, 2016

It should come as no surprise that sunlight does major damage to your skin (insert friendly reminder to wear sunscreen here!). But not all light is created equal, and in fact, there are multiple different types that can be incredibly *beneficial* to your complexion. "Light is a form of energy that's delivered to the skin," says cosmetic dermatologist [Paul Jarrod Frank](#), M.D. "While rays from the sun are known to be carcinogenic, the therapeutic forms of light are not, and are used to treat a variety of skin conditions." Ahead, Dr. Frank walks us through the various options. Let there be light!

Lasers

On the most extreme end of the spectrum are lasers—or what's known as 'coherent light', which can be used to address specific skin conditions, Dr. Frank explains. Based on the wavelength, lasers can treat everything from broken blood vessels to dark spots to irregular texture, he says. And while laser treatments can be pricey (be ready to shell out anywhere between \$600 and \$1250 per treatment, depending on the type of laser and where you live) the major pro is that they can target these exact issues without damaging the rest of the skin, says Frank. (There are at-home laser devices available, like the Tria Age-Defying Laser (\$495; [sephora.com](#)), but they're not as strong as in-office option.) It's also important to keep in mind that because these are the most aggressive form of light therapy, expect a little bit of downtime and side effects like redness and swelling.

LED Light

LED (light emitting diode) refers to the specific type of bulb and the source of this visible light. "It's been shown that the light emitted can affect the biology of the skin in a positive way, reducing inflammation and helping with conditions like acne, rosacea, and eczema," says Frank. Other benefits: There are no side effects, no downtime, and this kind of treatment can easily be done in the privacy of your own bathroom (at-home LED devices are becoming more and more popular and are typically less costly; at the dermatologist, treatments costs around \$500, says Frank). While he adds that these won't replace stronger, in-office light therapies, they are a good supplement. "You go to the dentist for a professional cleaning, but still have to brush and floss at home to maintain those results. These at-home options work similarly when it comes to your skin," he says. One to try: ReVive DPL II Full-Face Wrinkle Reduction LED Light Therapy Panel (\$349; [revivelighttherapy.com](#)). Plus, unlike some lasers, LED light is also safe and effective for all skin tones.

Colored Light

A type of LED treatment, colored light therapies deliver a specific wavelength of light that corresponds to a color which has a direct effect on skin. Most popular are red, which is said to stimulate collagen production, and blue, which kills acne-causing bacteria. These treatments—and light therapies in general—are notably beneficial for those with sensitive skin, who often can't tolerate the stronger topical ingredients, like retinoids, meant to address these problems, adds Frank. In-office treatments, done by your dermatologist or aesthetician, will run anywhere from \$175 to \$250; typically three to five sessions will yield the best results. There are also plenty of at-home options on the market, like the Derm Institute Youthifier LED Light Therapy Massager (\$130; diskincare.com) and the new Neutrogena Light Therapy Acne Mask (\$34.99; neutrogena.com).

IPL

More powerful than LED, but not quite as strong as lasers, IPL (aka intense pulsed light) uses a variety of wavelengths delivered in a pulsing pattern to treat brown spots, alleviate redness, and even remove hair, explains Frank. While IPL is similar to lasers in terms of what skin conditions it can treat, because it's not as strong, IPL treatments involve much less (if any) downtime, and are often more budget-friendly, costing somewhere around \$500 per treatment.

The bottom line: Light is a major player on the skin care scene. With so many different ways to use it and so many complexion issues that it can treat, it's worth looking into what it can do for you.