



SKIN & BEAUTY CENTER
Cosmetic, Medical and Surgical Dermatology

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Stretch Marks

What are stretch marks?

Stretch marks are caused by a rapid expansion of skin due to pregnancy or weight gain. When skin is stretched excessively it causes tiny tears in the second layer of skin and in many cases the top layer of skin, leaving stretch marks. This breakdown and/or loss of Collagen and Elastin fibers cause scars. They can vary in color from a light pink to a dark purple. Over a very long period of time, usually years, they can fade in color, however the skin scars remain. Stretch marks pose absolutely no health risk and don't compromise your body's ability to function healthily; they are purely a cosmetic issue and need to be treated accordingly.

Can stretch marks be improved?

It is often possible to improve the appearance of stretch marks. Overall, newer stretch marks respond better to treatment than stretch marks that are several years old. In general, some patients respond better than others so it is difficult to determine how much improvement any one individual can achieve. The appearance of the stretch marks might be improved minimally, or even up to 50% - 60% or better. We recommend an initial, low cost test area prior to undergoing full treatment, just to insure the treatment offers results.

What is the method for reducing stretch marks?

Non-invasive lasers and light based treatments to help increase collagen and elastin, and to improve discoloration. Treatments such as microdermabrasion and light chemical peels can help smooth the surface of the skin.

How does laser remove scars and stretch marks?

Since the etiology of scars and stretch marks are the same, they are treated with the same laser technique. A special laser beam is transmitted through the skin which loosens the collagen fibers, thus loosening the essence of the scar or stretch mark. The laser energy also creates a mild inflammation in the dermis structures which causes the body to restructure the area and create newer skin. This, in time, leads to disappearance of the scar and stretch marks. Unlike traditional treatments like stretch mark creams and gels, lasers are used to stimulate new collagen growth and fill the stretch mark from the bottom up. Depending on the size and location of the body to be treated, laser treatments last between 10-30 minutes. The number of treatments required depends on several factors related to your specific skin type and color. Usually five to six treatments spread out a month apart are required to achieve satisfactory results. Each pulse of laser feels like a slight sting or pinch, similar to the snap of a rubber band. Our lasers use a special cooling device which uses a computer controlled cryogen applicator to cool the skin temperature and keep it at a constant temperature at all times. This minimizes pain during treatment. Topical anesthetic creams may also be used but most people don't require it. You can resume all of your daily activities immediately after treatment. You should however avoid sun exposure for 4-6 weeks and wear a sun block on a daily basis.

Can the appearance of a scar be improved?

There are many different kinds of scars, but all scars occur as part of the skin's healing process when subjected to injury. Not every scar can be reduced or removed, but with the help of lasers, many can be improved. It is very important that the original injury is fully healed prior to considering any treatment.

How are scars improved?

Some scars can be improved surgically, while others are best treated with laser. Raised scars can often be smoothed with laser resurfacing. Depressed scars, like acne scars, typically benefit from non-invasive lasers that stimulate collagen.