

What's Your *Recipe*

What's your recipe for treating hyperpigmentation as a result of laser hair removal?

by Louis Silberman

Is it a mole or is it a shadow? No wait, it is hyperpigmentation! While most clients are thrilled with the smooth, silky results of laser hair removal, occasionally hyperpigmentation does occur post-treatment. So, what is this menacing condition and what can you do about it?

Hyperpigmentation is simply an irregular darkening of the skin caused by an increase in melanin production. It results from several possible causes, including fluctuating hormones, various underlying medical conditions, sun exposure, acne, skin injury, or inflammation. It can even be caused by some medications and birth control pills.

When it comes to hyperpigmentation caused by laser hair removal, numerous factors play a role in how the skin reacts to laser and intense pulsed light (IPL) hair removal technology. Oftentimes, it is just the way a particular skin responds to the laser's heat. That is why a thorough understanding of the skin's anatomy and the Fitzpatrick Scale are absolutely essential to anyone performing laser hair removal treatment. A highly qualified laser technician does not want to just help their clients get rid of unwanted hair; they also want the client to have beautiful-looking skin! However, if hyperpigmentation happens to your client after laser hair removal, here is my recipe for treating it:

- First of all, do not panic. While you have a legitimate concern, most of the time this type of hyperpigmentation is only temporary, lasting a month or two post-treatment. It may take some persistence on your part, but the chances are good that you will be able to correct, or at least improve the condition.
- Talk with your client about the best course of action for their skin type. Some skin responds well to a combination of lightening creams combined with retinoids, while others fare better with topical scrubs or microdermabrasion and light, regular chemical peels.
- Research the safety and efficacy of the lightening (bleaching) creams on the market today. While hydroquinone remains a popular choice, there is some concern about its side effects. There are several hydroquinone-free products available, which are equally effective.



- While you are treating the hyperpigmentation, clients need to avoid sun exposure like it is the plague. Recommend they use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30 daily.
- Most importantly, be patient and consistent. It may take some time to correct hyperpigmentation caused by laser hair removal, but there are options and the results will be well worth it.



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