

IPL – Intense Pulsed Light

What is IPL?

IPL means Intense Pulse Light. It is a non-laser form of light treatment that involves a very powerful light being emitted by a rapid pulse of flashes. These pulses are absorbed by the target structure in the skin - whether it is thread veins, unwanted hair or some other blemish – heating it and destroying it.

IPL is not the same as laser, although it is similar. The main difference is that laser (Light Amplification by the Stimulated Emission of Radiation) is a technique of producing light energy of only one wavelength. IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) uses white light which contains all the wavelengths of visible light from red to blue. However, to concentrate the treatments on different structures, filters are used to reduce certain wavelengths that are not needed for certain applications.

The intense pulse light machine emits short sharp bursts of light through a hand piece. This hand piece is placed on the skin's surface over the area to be treated. The feeling experienced by clients is described as anything from being "a warm feeling" to "an elastic band being pinged at the skin". The sensation does vary depending on the area of the body being treated – some areas being more sensitive than others.

As the light is very powerful (or intense) the area being treated does get quite hot. This is how the treatment works and so is a good response. To prevent the skin becoming too hot, a cooling gel is used. This helps keep the skin cool and helps provide good contact between the IPL hand piece and the target skin during the treatment.

The pulses of light and their power vary depending on the type of treatment being performed – whether for thread veins or hair removal - and also the thickness and density of the hair or veins. The settings are chosen by the doctor, nurse or therapist at the consultation and then a patch test is performed.

As treatments progress, the settings might be changed depending on the clinical results from each session.

How does IPL work?

The basic principle is that light energy is absorbed by the target – hair, thread veins, pigmented skin etc. The absorbed energy produces heat which destroys the target structure. Depending on the treatment being carried out, the absorption levels of the target vary.

For hair removal, red light is used. The light emitted from the hand piece heats the melanin in the hair shaft travelling down to the bulb of the hair. Prior to treatment the hair is clipped so there is minimal hair outside the skin. Thus the heat is concentrated on the remaining hair in the shaft which travels down to the hair bulb damaging the growing cells in the follicle and, usually, permanently destroying them.

The treatment is a fairly fast procedure that causes very little downtime for clients

The darker the hair and the paler the skin the better the result as the darker hair will absorb more light energy. Lighter coloured hair such as blonde or grey does not have the colour in it to absorb the light energy and therefore the heat is reduced. This means that a poor result is more likely.

In an effort to increase the energy absorption by light coloured hair, people have tried to dye the hair darker. However this does not work as the dyed hair is outside of the follicle and so the cells that need to be destroyed (the follicle cells) don't get the heat energy and therefore remain undamaged.

For skin rejuvenation and thread vein removal, the treatment is carried out using a yellow light. This heats the surface of the skin helping to

repair the damage caused by the sun.

The target, whether thread veins or pigmented areas of skin, absorb more light energy than the pale normal skin. Therefore the veins or pigmented areas generate more heat and are damaged more.

Obviously IPL, like laser treatment, has a few risks – particularly if it is used incorrectly. All of our therapists, nurses and doctors are trained to the highest standard. Our facility also meets the required standards by the regulatory body The Care Quality Commission.

Who is suitable for IPL treatment?

The Energist IPL machine has been designed to provide a safe and effective treatment for clients. As with all medical treatments there are contraindications and risks which may mean treatments need to be adapted for specific clients - or postponed for a period of time.

All of our clients have a full consultation and patch test treatment. This is a treatment of one area of skin out of view, using the chosen settings, to make sure that the client doesn't react to the treatment. We use this to establish if our clients are suitable for treatment and reduce the risks of any adverse reactions.

What conditions and areas can be treated with IPL?

For hair removal most areas of the body can be treated. These include legs, bikini line and extended bikini line, chin, upper lip, underarms, forearms, back and chest.

For skin rejuvenation, thread vein removal and many skin complaints caused by ageing or sun damage. These include: redness, rosacea, age spots, freckles, pigment changes, skin texture and fine lines.

Thread veins on the face can be treated successfully although we would not treat thread veins on the legs unless you had been consulted by one of our Consultants at the Whiteley Clinic. This is due to the fact that thread veins on the legs usually have an underlying cause which cannot be treated by IPL alone.

The Treatment

At the consultation the clinician will suggest a treatment that is suitable for each client, taking into account their needs, wishes and requirements.

Depending on the treatment to be undertaken, the basic procedure will remain the same, varying only in the area that is treated and the colour of applicator head. The treatment is a fairly fast procedure that causes very little downtime for clients (possibly a small amount of reddening to the treated area that will fade fast). This fact also makes IPL a realistic treatment to incorporate into today's busy lifestyles.

What do clients need to do prior to, or after, treatment?

It is advisable to stay out of the sun, and away from tanning beds, for at least 6 weeks prior to any treatment to ensure that the skin is as close as possible to its natural colour.

Clients must ensure that all cosmetics are removed from the treatment area with a good cleanser and then allow the skin to settle. As the skin may be more sensitive for a while post-treatment, it is recommended to use skin products developed for sensitive skin and again avoid the sun or tanning beds.

Also, prior to hair removal treatment we advise against waxing or tweezing the area to be treated as the hair needs to remain in the follicle (see explanation of IPL above). However, we do

ask clients to either shave or use hair removal cream a couple of days before treatment so the hair is as short as possible on the surface of the skin. This method of hair removal can be used in between treatment sessions as well.

How quickly will results be seen?

Depending on the treatment being performed and area treated, the speed at which the results are noticed will vary. Most people will need a course of about 6 sessions to gain optimum results although this is variable depending on the individual. These treatments will take place over a series of weeks/months. As with all medical treatments, IPL relies on healing and so there are no instant results to clear an area. Results depend very much on the client's skin and their body's natural hair growth.

If you would like to know more about IPL at Absolute Aesthetics, please look at the website: www.absoluteaesthetics.co.uk or contact us on: info@absoluteaesthetics.co.uk or Tel: 01483 477 189

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