10 Uses for Laser, Light and Energy-based Devices

Remove that unwanted hair
Lasers remove unwanted hair from the face and body by targeting the pigment of the hair and damaging its follicle so that hair growth is slowed. In order for lasers to be effective, the hair must be treated while in its “active growth” phase. This is why multiple (usually six to eight) treatments spaced four weeks apart on the face and as much as eight weeks apart on the body are needed to achieve good results. Note: Only specific lasers are appropriate for darker skin types, and those with tanned skin should avoid the treatment.

Do away with those age spots
Sun damage and aging can result in unwanted brown spots (called lentigines) on sun-exposed areas such as the face, chest and hands. Those spots can successfully be treated with Q-switched lasers and IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) devices. Several treatments may be required to achieve optimal results.

Treat redness and broken blood vessels
Lasers are effective at treating skin redness from conditions such as rosacea as well as benign vascular growths such as angiomas and broken blood vessels that can occur from sun damage. The treatment works because lasers at certain wavelengths can target hemoglobin that is found in blood. Typically one to a few treatments may be needed for optimal results. It is important to use a broad-spectrum sunscreen after the treatment.

Banish those breakouts
Lasers and light-based devices can successfully treat mild to moderate acne. While conventional methods to get rid of acne include topical and oral medications (such as antibiotics and retinoids), the use of photodynamic therapy can be effective in achieving long-lasting clear skin. Photodynamic therapy combines the use of a photosensitizing chemical that is absorbed both by the oil glands and the bacteria that produce acne – followed by a light source or laser to activate the chemical. This results in shrinkage of the oil glands and killing of the bacteria.
Refresh and rejuvenate
A newer generation of devices today allows for skin resurfacing that removes the top layer of skin to eliminate signs of aging and photodamage such as fine lines, wrinkles, crepiness and brown spots as well as reducing enlarged pores – all with minimal downtime.

Soften the look of scars
Lasers can improve the appearance of scars – whether they were caused by acne, trauma or surgery. Some devices – like the pulsed dye laser – can help reduce the redness associated with scars. Fractional resurfacing lasers can successfully improve a scar’s texture and tone. Depending which device is used, there may be a period of downtime following the treatment and a need for several treatments.

Get rid of those love handles
Sometimes it seems like no matter how much you diet and exercise, you just can’t get rid of stubborn fat around the midsection, hips, thighs or arms. Devices using novel technologies such as radiofrequency, controlled cooling and ultrasound can kill off those fat cells and improve body contours.

Take care of that ‘turkey neck’
With age comes a loss in collagen, which can result in loose skin on the neck and under the chin – affectionately known as “turkey neck.” Fortunately, there are non-invasive technologies that utilize ultrasound and radiofrequency to stimulate collagen production – resulting in skin tightening and lifting. These treatments also can be used for wrinkles on the décolletage, that crepe-paper look on the upper chest.

End embarrassing sweat stains
A specialty device that delivers electromagnetic energy can permanently eliminate under-arm sweat and odor glands. This non-invasive treatment for excessive sweating – called hyperhidrosis – is done in an office-based setting.

Rethink the ink
Fortunately there are options for those 20 percent of people who experience tattoo regret. Q-switched lasers have been used for decades to heat up and destroy the tattoo ink particles, usually over multiple treatments. Newer technology using ultra-short bursts of energy can achieve the same results in fewer treatments. Certain ink colors only respond to specific laser wavelengths so it may be necessary to be treated with different devices to completely remove a tattoo.

ASDS members are the skin experts. See an ASDS member dermatologist for more information regarding these procedures.