

## Laser Treatment for Skin Conditions

**What is laser treatment of the skin?** Laser therapy is a treatment that uses light energy to treat skin conditions. At CHOC, Dr. Daniel Jaffurs uses a pulsed dye laser (PDL) to treat children with different skin conditions. PDL uses the light energy that is changed into heat to destroy blood vessels, while leaving the surrounding skin unharmed.

### **What skin conditions can be treated with laser therapy?**

- Infantile hemangiomas
- Port-wine stains
- Telangiectasias (spider veins)
- Scars after surgery.

**What can we expect with laser therapy?** The laser often makes the area treated look bruised or darker after the treatment. This will usually get lighter in color within 1 to 2 weeks. The area will slowly lighten over the next 1 to 2 months. There may also be swelling after the treatment. Blisters are very uncommon. This may last for a few days. Depending on the size of the lesion, multiple laser treatments are often needed. There is no guarantee that laser treatments will completely clear the areas. It normally takes about 6 treatments for each area. We wait about 2 months between treatments on the same area.

Laser treatments, are done under anesthesia or sedation because the child must stay completely still. At CHOC, we use medication to decrease pain to the area being treated and medication inhaled through a mask to sedate the child during the procedure. The length of the laser procedure depends on the size of the area and can range from 5 minutes to 60 minutes. In addition, the child will need about 30 minutes in the recovery area before going home.

**What are the risks of laser treatment?** The risk of scarring is less than 1 percent. The laser may cause changes in the color of the skin. This usually gets better with time and fades away within a few months. Sometimes the area the laser treated can blister. Scars that look like tiny pits and loss of pigmentation (skin color) can also happen, but these are very rare.

**Where is laser treatment done?** Laser treatments are done outpatient in the Procedure Center, located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the main CHOC Hospital Building (Bill Holmes South Tower).

### **How do I prepare my child for the day of laser procedure?**

Stay out of sun and use hats/sunscreen.

Feeding guidelines:

- Stop giving your child formula or solid food 8 hours before the procedure.
- Stop giving your child breastmilk 6 hours before the procedure.
- Stop giving your child clear liquids and water 3 hours before the procedure.

Please check in at CHOC two hours before your child's procedure is scheduled to begin.

### **Will laser treatment be covered by insurance?**

Some insurance plans will cover laser treatments, other plans will not cover it. Most insurance plans will try to decide if the treatment of a port wine stain or vascular abnormality is a medical need or a cosmetic procedure. If it is found to be a medical need, it is often covered by insurance. Also, if the hemangioma affects your child's ability to do everyday activities, or to be severely disfiguring (such as port wine stain or vascular abnormality on the face), your insurance may cover it. If it is seen as only for cosmetic reasons, it may not be covered.

Once your child has been seen in our clinic and determined to be a good candidate for laser treatment, a financial coordinator at CHOC will submit an authorization request for the laser procedure to your insurance company. We usually require an approval from your insurance company before scheduling your child's laser procedure.