

Fact Sheet

Vascular and Pigmented Lesions using the Harmony AFT 540 / 570 Pulsed Light

Please read this leaflet carefully this forms the basis of your consent for treatment. If there is anything you do not understand or are concerned about please raise this during your consultation.

Cosmetic flaws may be caused by heredity, medication, pregnancy or environmental factors. Yet, most vascular and pigmented lesions are ideal candidates for non-invasive AFT Pulsed Light treatments. Intense Pulsed Light has been used very successfully for treatment of diffused vascular conditions such as telangiectasia, some hemangiomas, rosacea and pigmented lesions such as port wine stains for more than 20 years. However it is not a Laser treatment, which is an effective alternative for treatment of marked facial and leg thread veins and deeply pigmented lesions. The following information is designed to cover the most commonly asked questions.

Why is a pigmented lesion so difficult to remove?

It is difficult to remove pigmentation without affecting the surrounding tissue. Before the development of Intense Pulsed light and laser therapy the only alternatives were to physically remove the pigmentation and the surrounding skin by surgical excision and skin grafting or to chemically destroy the pigmentation using salts or acid. Such techniques cause considerable discomfort, damage to the surrounding skin and require significant after care. Typically they replace the original pigmentation with a scar.

How does the Harmony Advanced Fluorescence Technology (AFT) work?

AFT's selective pulsed light energy is precisely absorbed by the target areas, without damaging healthy skin. Selectively heating and closing off blood vessels, AFT pulsed light reduces the lesions, while sparing nearby tissue from injury. With pigmented lesions, the light energy heats the melanin in the lesion and causes it to fragment. The melanin fragments are then absorbed by the body and eliminated. By providing smooth, consistent light pulses, the energy delivered to the skin is gentle and effective.

Successive treatments are needed, usually at 2-3 week intervals, so that this whole procedure is repeated and the body can remove as much pigment as possible.

Can a pigmented lesion be removed in just one treatment?

Very rarely. Generally we would expect several treatments to be required. As with all medical treatments it is possible that not everyone will respond to treatment. Some patients may obtain a less than average response or may not respond at all.

How many treatments are required to remove the average lesion?

Due to the many variations in size, colour and type there is no such thing as an average lesion. The number of treatments required will also depend on the body's own defence mechanism and how effective it is – each individual responds differently. As a guide most lesions can take anywhere between 3-6 treatments. Without seeing the lesion it is impossible to be more accurate, a free consultation is provided where a better estimate can be given.

Is the treatment cost fixed throughout the course of treatment?

As the lesion fades away, the size will normally reduce, although this is not always the case, some lesions will fade evenly without reducing in size. Consequently, treatment cost is re-assessed on an individual basis as the treatment progresses. If the size of the lesion reduces significantly during treatment, the price will be reduced accordingly.

Do all pigmented lesions respond to treatment?

Unfortunately not. In most cases it will be apparent to the assessor whether there is likely to be a problem. Where there is any doubt, a test patch will be required to determine the likelihood of successful treatment. In our experience, it is better to find out about potential problems before the whole area has been treated and a large sum of money has already been spent.

How long does a treatment take?

This depends on the size of the lesion; a small lesion might take 5 minutes, where a large or multiple lesions could take an hour or more of treatment. Again, the assessor will provide this information.

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Does it hurt?

While pain tolerance is an individual matter, most people tolerate AFT Pulsed Light treatment well, and describe the sensation as a rubber band snap to the skin. The majority of patients require no anaesthesia, though topical anaesthetic cream is an option for sensitive areas, some patients hardly feel a thing where others will describe it as painful. The vast majority of people tolerate

Does the AFT (IPL) cause scarring?

The AFT Pulsed Light does not heat the surrounding skin and the risk of scarring is very much reduced. The risk of scarring is mainly, though not entirely, associated with a genetic pre-disposition to forming scar tissue. To reduce the risk of scarring we carry out a medical evaluation to identify high risk patients. We also have an adjunct treatment that can stop scar tissue forming and even improve existing scarring; consequently our scarring record is very low.

Are there any other side effects?

Most patients will have erythema (redness) after a treatment. Rarely, some patients will blister. This is quite normal and will usually resolve in a week or so (you will be given an aftercare information advice sheet on what to do). Once any blisters have subsided, the skin around the treated area may look and feel shiny for a number of weeks. Treatment cannot be repeated until the skin condition has returned to normal – usually 2-4 weeks.

The highest risk side effect is skin de-pigmentation (loss of natural skin colour). Because the pulsed light targets dark pigments, AFT 540 energy is also absorbed by the melanin in the skin.

The most frequent side effect is for the natural colour in the skin to 'bleach' after a number of treatments. While normal skin pigment will usually recover, it can take months to do so and, in some rare cases, the natural colour of the skin may not return at all. As a general guideline, the darker the skin and the more treatments required, the more risk there is of long term de-pigmentation. Freckles often disappear at the site of the treatment. Because of the risk of damage to skin pigment, we will not treat tanned skin and will postpone treatment until any suntan has faded.

We recommend that patients do not allow their skin to tan before or during treatment, thereby reducing the risk of long-term de-pigmentation. During the period of treatment a sun blocking cream (factor 30+) should be used daily or the treatment area kept covered.

An area which is particularly hairy may need to be shaved prior to treatment. The hair should grow back normally but there have been some reports of minimal and very slow hair growth.

Is the treatment safe?

AFT's high levels of light and gentle energy parameters assure safe, effective treatment. Uniquely shaped AFT pulses precisely heat their intended targets, causing remarkably little or no skin damage or discomfort. This optimal use of energy both increases safety and eliminates the needs for cooling methods. Clinical trials conducted by leading authorities on pulsed light, documents its safety and effectiveness.

How much will it cost?

The cost of the treatment is dependent upon the area treated; whilst an approximate cost may be given the actual cost will be detailed within the consultation appointment.

A consultation is required before embarking on any treatment regime, test patches are also undertaken.

A parent or guardian must accompany anyone aged under 18.

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About the Clinic

Laserase Bolton has been based at Bolton Royal Hospital since 1994. Throughout we have been fully registered with the appropriate governing body, who regularly inspects our clinic. You have the reassurance that your treatment will be conducted by a fully qualified and experienced doctor or nurse. All of our doctors and nurses have extensive training and experience; they are continually updated and assessed on new techniques.

We would be delighted to tell you about any treatments we offer - visit our website: www.laserase-bolton.co.uk

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