

## New boon for pimple scars: Pixel Laser Resurfacing

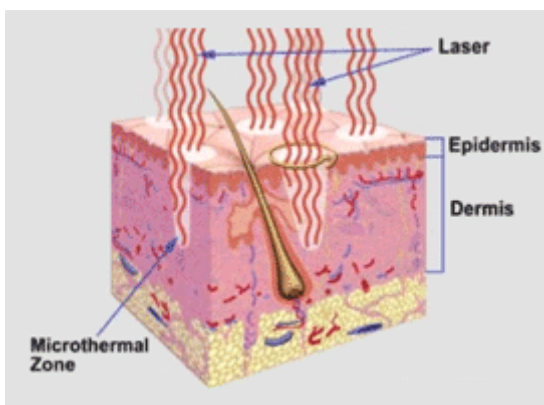
Pimples (acne) are a major cause for disfigurement on the face, in young people. Most young people get pimples, to a varying degree during puberty, which usually heal and subside by adulthood, by 25 years of age. In about 30% of people they continue in to adult hood, even thirties and forties. When they subside, they tend to heal with disfiguring scars causing much psychological disability and social embarrassment. Like wise, scars due to chicken pox, injury, burns, and wrinkles due to ageing changes all can affect people severely. Particularly in the present days of beauty awareness, when a faultless skin is desired and cherished, a scarred face is major disadvantage to young people, particularly for their marriage prospects.

Despite the many advances in the past, scarring, particularly acne or pimple scarring did not have a satisfactory treatment. Several treatments of the past such as dermabrasion, microdermabrasion, chemical peeling, laser resurfacing, and cosmetic surgery had disadvantages of either being too mild and ineffective or too aggressive and complicated. Recently a new treatment **fractional or pixel laser resurfacing** has emerged; this article gives details of this new treatment.

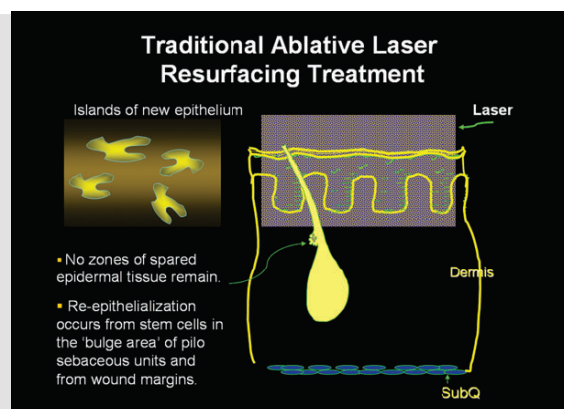
### What is fractional or PIXEL laser technology?

In this technology, skin is treated in fractions (hence the name fractional photothermolysis) or pixels (skin is divided in to zones or pixels, just like a digital camera), thereby removing tissue by scattered ablation( destruction), in contrast to the total ablation done by previous lasers. The Pixel thus treats only a small fraction of the skin (about 25-35%), and leaves the rest of skin unaffected (see figure below). This is responsible for rapid healing and recovery, thereby minimizing downtime. The treatment is repeated every 2-4 weeks wherein remaining pixels or fractions are treated, progressively.

Pixel laser ablation

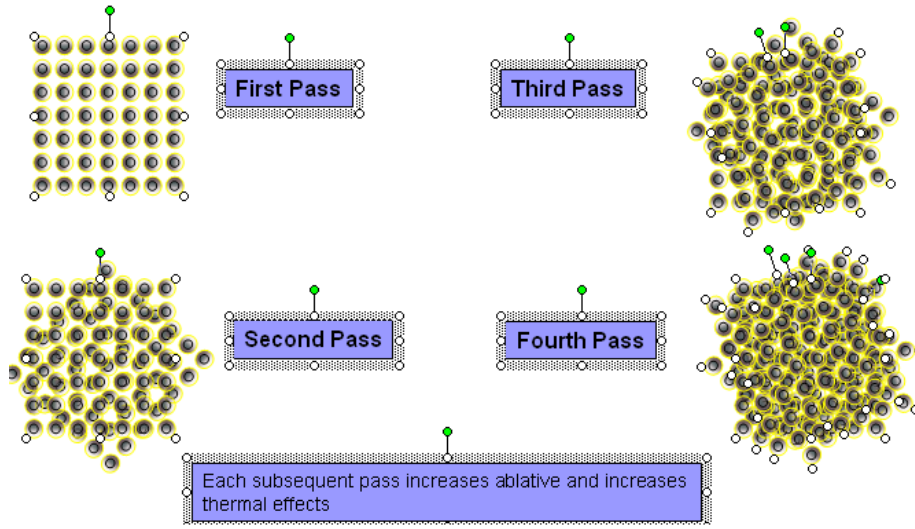


Traditional laser ablation



The pixel system is thus similar to a digital camera, where in by increasing the number of pixels in a photo, quality of photo can be improved. Here too, by

increasing the pixels or zones of skin treated in each session, the final results are improved.



### What is the advantage of PIXEL Laser?

The major advantage of pixel laser is its rapid healing time and minimal after effects. Previous laser treatments (erbium Yag laser or CO2 laser), destroyed (ablated) the upper layer of skin entirely and completely. This caused considerable after effects such as crusting, swelling, redness etc for 3-6 weeks and a tendency for pigmentation. For these reasons, these old lasers though effective, never became popular in India. Therefore, treatment of scars and wrinkles has so far remained a difficult challenge. The new pixel laser using fractionated ablative technology retains the efficacy of the old lasers, while reducing the healing time and their after effects. It can be used not only on the face, but also on neck, chest, arms and hands, a much wider scope than the traditional technologies. It improves the tone and texture of the skin, by reducing and almost removing discoloration due to age, UV ray exposure, while decreasing visible pore size, hyperpigmentation, and improving acne scars.

Thus the, treatment is state of the art, quick, effective, painless and without too much downtime.

### What are the uses of PIXEL laser?

The major use of pixel laser as mentioned is acne or pimple scarring. It can also be used to treat several other conditions such as:

- Other scars due to chickenpox, injury and burns
- Pores and oily skin
- Pigmentation problems
- For improvement of uneven skin tone and skin texture

- Rejuvenation of ageing skin
- Wrinkles and fine lines
- Stretch marks ( in selected cases)

### **What can patients expect?**



The treatment is quick and lasts only for 15-20 minutes .There is little or no discomfort during the treatment and hence there is no need for any anesthesia. Patients may feel slight warmth during treatment. Patients experience mild sunburn like sensation afterwards (3-4 hours) and skin may look a bit bronzed or tanned for 1-3 days. This is easily neutralized with a gentle moisturizer. Make-up can be applied immediately afterward and patient may return to work with in 1-3 days. Patient may need to use sunscreens in the post treatment period. Patients will find the skin around the treatment area feeling firmer with a smoother surface texture. They will not need pain medication and can return to home immediately after the treatment.

### **What is the downtime (healing time)?**

There is relatively little down time. Redness may occur for a few hours and flaking for one or two days with full recovery in three-five days, even in patients with deep scars.

### **How many treatments are necessary?**

Skin resurfacing with the Pixel is a gradual process that happens over several treatments, usually 3-6 sessions (depending on the depth of the scar) at 2-4 week intervals.

### **What is the cost of the treatment?**

The important thing to notice is that a pixel laser treatment is not more expensive than previous acne scar treatments. Each session costs between 2,000-4000 Rs depending on the area treated.

Thus pixel laser has emerged as an exciting new treatment for acne scars wrinkles etc. It is safe and effective. However, it should be understood that treatment of scars is always a difficult process and realistic expectation on the part of the patient is very important.

The facility is available at Venkat Charmalaya centre for advanced dermatology, **3437, 1<sup>st</sup> G cross, 7<sup>th</sup> Main, next to BTS garage, Subbanna Gardens, Vijaya Nagar, Bangalore Ph:23392788, 23392416** , which is offering free consultation for one week from 12-19<sup>th</sup> May 2008 for patients with scars.