



# Saving Face

Too much fun in the sun takes a toll on your skin, but laser treatments can leave you with a new and younger look. **By Denise Bates Enos**

LIKE JUST ABOUT EVERYBODY WHO LIVED through-and participated in the baby oil-and-tinfoil era of sunbathing in Florida, I have sun-damaged skin. Sunspots, crow's feet, my face has them all.

So what's a Sunshine State resident to do? For me, it was time to call out the big guns. As in laser resurfacing.

There are four main types of resurfacing, or ablative, lasers (see "Laser Treatments," page 33), all of which can achieve dramatic results. I chose the fractionated CO2 laser for its on - the - lower - end - of - the - scale pain level and fast recovery time as well as its potential results.

The entire procedure takes about an hour and a half - an hour of waiting for the topical anesthetic to take full effect and 20 to 25 minutes for the laser treatment, which produces a hot, pricking sensation. I left the plastic surgeon's office slathered in protective goop, my skin look-

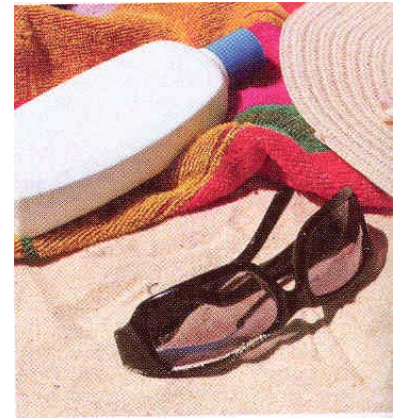
ing red and a bit puffy. The next day, the redness and swelling were nearly gone, and I could see the dotted pattern the laser left on my skin. Over the next week, my skin darkened and peeled away, leaving a smoother, much more even complexion. Those pesky fine wrinkles around my eyes? Diminished dramatically. The sunspots? Significantly faded.

While I'm glad that technology has yielded effective skin-resurfacing treatments, my skin would have been in much better shape to begin with if I had just worn sunblock with a Skin Protection Factor of at least 30

(see "An Ounce of Prevention,") every day. It's never too late to start doing so-now, I won't leave home without it, and you shouldn't, either.

Sunbathing may leave you with bronze skin, giving you a radiant and healthy appearance, but it may come back to haunt you later in life

## An Ounce of Prevention



Instead of tanning your hide, protect your skin with a full-spectrum sunblock

There's a far more serious reason to wear sunblock than maintaining an attractive complexion: decreasing the risk of skin cancer. According to Dr. Alysia Herman, a member of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery who practices in Miami, both the American Cancer Society and the Skin Cancer Foundation annually "report an increase in the number of all types of skin cancer. Awareness may be improving, but it has not yet decreased the incidence."

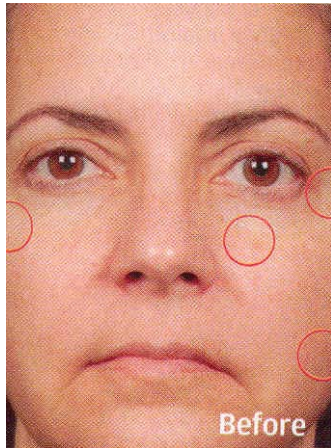
As with any type of cancer, early detection is key. Most doctors recommend annual skin checks with a dermatologist for both children and adults; more frequent visits are required for people with a family or personal history of skin cancer and those who are fair-skinned, especially if they have a history of severe burns or extensive sun exposure.

Of course, prevention is the best medicine. Wear sunblock daily with an SPF of at least 30, and choose one that is full-spectrum, protecting against both UVA and UVB rays.

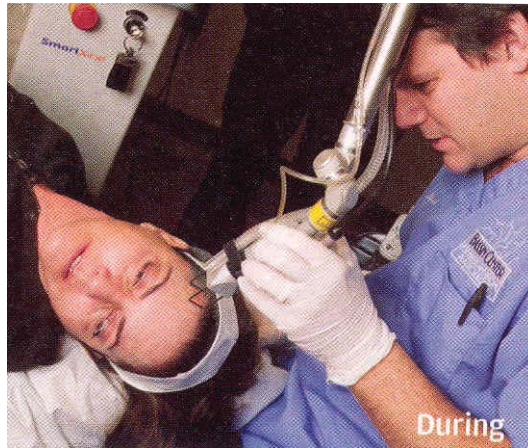
For more information visit [www.bassinplasticsurgery.com](http://www.bassinplasticsurgery.com)

# Laser Treatments

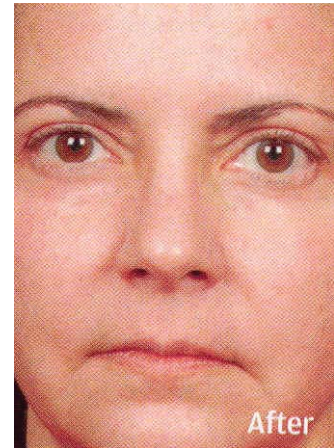
Ablative (also known as skin-resurfacing) lasers essentially remove a layer of the skin's surface, allowing clearer, less blemished skin to develop in its place. Lasers also stimulate Collagen production, which "plumps" the skin to reduce the appearance of fine lines and give a more youthful appearance. The following is a rundown of the types of laser treatments available through dermatologists and medical-laser centers.



Before  
Circles highlight sunspots and fine lines on Denise Bates Enos' face



During  
Dr. Roger Bassin, of the Bassin Center for Facial Plastic Surgery, uses a Dot Laser to lessen the effects of sun exposure to Enos' face



After  
A week after a treatment, sunspots and fine lines are greatly diminished

## ^ Fractionated CO<sub>2</sub> (Dot) Laser

**Benefits:** There's less pain, risk and reddening than the CO<sub>2</sub> laser, with nearly identical skin-improving results. Like the Fraxel, dot lasers don't ablate the entire skin's surface, but do so in a fractionated pattern-like the pixels in a grainy photograph.

**Cost:** About \$1,800 to \$2,000 per treatment; only one treatment is typically required, and the effects last for years.

**Caveats:** Expect two or four days of downtime while the skin heals

### CO<sub>2</sub> Laser

**Benefits:** This process offers optimum skin resurfacing, lightens sunspots, reduces the appearance of fine wrinkles and scars, and even tightens the skin.

**Cost:** About \$2,400 to \$3,500 per treatment; only one treatment is typically required, and the effects last for years

**Caveats:** CO<sub>2</sub> lasers can cause uneven pigmentation of the skin. Downtime while the skin heals can last up to three weeks; in some cases, the redness lasts for months. Care must be taken to avoid the risk of infection.

### Erbium Laser

**Benefits:** This procedure reduces fine wrinkles, sunspots and other skin irregularities, but is not as effective as the CO<sub>2</sub>

**Cost:** About \$300 up to \$1,000 per treatment; only one treatment is typically required, and the effects last for years

**Caveats:** Skin will be red and tender for five to seven days, then peeling will last about a week.

### Fractional Erbium (Fraxel) Laser

**Benefits:** A "fractionated," less intense form of the erbium laser, the Fraxel fades sunspots and reduces fine wrinkles with less pain and little or no downtime.

**Cost:** About \$700-\$800 per treatment, with three to four treatments required

**Caveats:** Maintenance treatments of once or twice a year are often necessary.