

Considering cosmetic laser surgery? Ask your doctor if the machine is a rental.

In the war against wrinkles and skin imperfections, keep in mind that quality of care varies widely.

Lunchtime laser surgery - a 15-minute "minimalist" procedure that leaves no trace and gets you back to work with no downtime is the latest breakthrough in cosmetic laser surgery.

Such quick, painless procedures - known as "Cool Touch" and "Photorejuvenation" - are the perfect solution for women on the go.

Be smart, though, when you choose your doctor.

All surgery involves some risk, but familiarity with the complex, idiosyncratic and high-powered machinery used in laser procedures makes training and hands-on experience especially critical.

In choosing your doctor, start by asking the key question: Do you rent the machine you'll be using on me?

If your physician rents lasers, that tells you something about how often they perform laser surgery.

There are less than 20 major cosmetic laser surgery centers in the U.S.

Unfortunately rental lasers make up most of the market for cosmetic laser machines. Doctors who rent lasers-and do not perform skin laser surgery as their primary specialty-can seriously injure patients.

Most common problems: over-burning and over-treatment.

Other questions you should ask before agreeing to the procedure:

- a.. What are your medical credentials?
- b.. How often have you performed this procedure?
- c.. How long have you trained on the machine you'll be using on me?
- d.. How often have you used this machine for my specific procedure?
- e.. What side-effects have your patients suffered? How often have they occurred?
- f.. Can I speak to several of your patients?

If the answers raise even one red flag, find another laser surgeon - one who passes the risk test.