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Let yourself glow once again

(From L to R) Dr Jaishree Sharad, Dr Simple Aher, Dr Kiran Hebbalkar and Dr Rekha Sheth at the dna-Alma Lasers' Vibrant Forever workshop in Juhu; and Soumen Dutta, managing director of Alma Lasers, India and SAARC region, addresses the gathering (Left) Dr Simple Aher demonstrates the procedure of removing hair using laser beams and (right) the gathering at the workshop (Emmanuel Karbhari)

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Four accomplished physicians leave their audience spellbound with lifestyle and anti-ageing tips in the fourth edition of dna-Alma Lasers' Vibrant Forever workshop



The stage was set with four accomplished physicians, radiant in their good knowledge and great health, teaming up to educate the city's enthusiasts on frequently hushed-up topics like Skin Pigmentation, Hair Removal, Body Contouring, Laser Technology and vital lifestyle tips. dna-Alma Lasers' rally of health workshops, in and around the city, achieved a new high when ace dermatologists and aesthetic medical practitioners Dr Rekha Sheth, Dr Jaishree Sharad, Dr Simple Aher and Dr Kiran Hebbalkar left their Juhu audience ecstatic with tips and gifts (that's right!) galore.

Looking into lifestyle

With the audience in high spirits, the doctors decided to cut short preachy lectures and get interactive in a two-way exchange. Dr Sharad started the afternoon on an interactive note, speaking and inviting questions on lifestyle and anti-ageing. "We start ageing the day we are born. Think about it — our nanis and dadis made sure that as babies we enjoyed besan leps, oil maalish and constant protection from the sun. So why is it that when they left us on our own as grown-ups, we stopped taking care of ourselves?" she wondered. Dr Sharad pointed out the usual culprits of junk food, excessive stress, unhealthy fad diets, inadequate sleep and lack of exercise as the areas where we need to start implementing some major rehaults. "The skin craves moisture, hydration and protection from sun," she explained, adding that high pollution and hormones gone haywire with age can wreck havoc on the same. The good part — "Lifestyle changes begin within us. Eat healthy, take the stairs instead of the elevators, always remove your make-up, moisturize daily, go for exfoliation and microdermabrasion once in a while — most importantly, make sunscreen your life partner and happiness your best friend," were her surprisingly easy-to-adopt mantras. Oh, and those above 25 — the doctor's asked you to keep your vitamins handy.

A lowdown on lasers; plus...

In the true spirit of free interaction, the doctors clarified a barrel of lifestyle and health related queries, busting myths and reiterating basics that we forget in our daily hustle. While Dr Sheth explained that rejuvenation facials help mostly in destressing and temporary brightening of the skin, something as complex as anti-ageing can be achieved only through the high technology of lasers. Dr Sharad insisted that lasers are both preventive and curative, i.e., undergoing the right laser treatments before the signs of ageing start manifesting is wise, but there's all the hope for those who fail to start early. Additionally, the "down time" or recovery period being almost zero in case of lasers, one can plan a hair removing or body contouring session one day and be right on time at work the next! Of course, the treatments have to be complemented by the right food and lifestyle choices; "no smoking, no excess sugar, limited alcohol," would sum up the holistic body system required to turn back the clock by "5, 7, even 10 years", reckoned the doctors.

Hair and now

Dr Aher's approach to her audience was hands-on. Quite literally so, as she stepped off her podium and among the eclectic crowd, rousing them to put a show of hands as she threw at them general knowledge questions on skin, hair, lasers, to give away vouchers for each correct answer. It was a tough call, as youngsters, middle-aged women, men, even grandmothers chorused in unison whenever they could recall the answers. Dr Aher stressed on the need for expert consultation (with certified physicians) and FDA-approved laser machines (Alma being a pioneer) while going for laser hair removal. After all, up to 80 per cent hair reduction, while technically not amounting to 'removal', is still the safest, most painless gift of lasers to mankind, isn't it? "Laser is a concentrated beam of light that penetrates the skin to destroy hair follicle. For a regular person with no hormonal imbalance, it might take anything between 6-10 sessions, while those with a genetic predisposition to hair growth or hormone issues may require some more," she clarified. To the query of a 12-year-old with self-esteem issues related to upper hair lip, she recommended psychological counselling along with professionally supervised laser treatment starting 3 years post "the age of menarche (when a female begins menstruating)".

Don't blame the laser

The doctors could not stop stressing on the dangers of unqualified laser-treatment performers and cheap machines as a mail query about a botched laser procedure raised legitimate concerns. To their delight, the audience at Novotel seemed to be informed in this regard, as a lady interjected to opine that "laser treatment has complications only when done without adequate medical supervision." So next time you contemplate a procedure, it might be a good idea to ask your doctor what machine they are using. Dr Sharad also shared that those with hormonal issues should look at addressing their health concerns before such treatments. "If you can get treated for your PCOS (Polycystic Ovary Syndrome) or any other hormonal problems along with this high-end treatment, the results are likely to be great," she said. On a query on 'hand/home lasers' from amongst the audience Dr Hebbalkar said, "These are a very low energy lasers, not at all meant to offer lasting results. There lies the difference."

Push away pigmentation

While pigmentation itself is a very natural phenomena of the skin, explained Dr. Hebbalkar—with our melanocyte cells producing melanin, the colour-producing pigment of the human body— cases of hypo (decreased) or hyper (increased) pigmentation and melasma (mostly in women) lead to uneven distribution of the skin tone. For that purpose, laser pigmentation treatment scores all the right points. Hormonal imbalance, sun exposure, post-pregnancy changes, obesity, medical side-effects and scented toiletries were cited as some reasons of unnatural/undesirable pigmentation.

"Sometimes, if the patient is stressed out and starts picking at the skin, it can leave them with a scar and resultant pigmentation of the neighbouring skin," she added. "We need to take into account the detailed history of the person, including the age, profession and daily routine," she said, establishing that skin care, laser or non-laser, is much more personalised than some assume. There were, however, some generic advice that all can benefit from when it comes to skin-health. "Apply a sunscreen, even if only of SPF 15, and reapply every two hours when out in the sun," said Dr Hebbalkar, the proud owner of envy-worthy clear skin herself. She mentioned that exfoliation, 2-3 times a week for those with dry skin, and once for those with sensitive skin, is a good way of battling accumulated pigments on the epidermal layer of the skin. Granular scrubs can be harmful for those with sensitive skin, she said, instead rooting for a "mild cleanser, a broad-rimmed hat and make-up with sunscreen in its composition". Zeroing in on lasers, she shared "Fractional lasers do an excellent job of removing pigmentation without damaging the skin or forcing the patient into a long recovery," she insisted, vouching that s/he can go about their day normally while safely getting rid of unwanted pigmentation. That lasers work wonders on stubborn acne scars was another take-home from her interaction, which ended with a strong case for daily cleansing and moisturising to keep your skin healthy.

Beat that body fat

Dr Rekha Sheth began with a simple definition of body contouring, inviting responses from the audience. "What part of the body are you trying to contour? The fatty parts," she said, pointing, again, at a need for lifestyle management. "How many of you have weight issues?" she asked, bravely identifying herself among those responding in positive. "So many young girls have PCOS these days. Remember that you cannot possibly knock off all that weight with hormonal issues going on. So please, start exercising," she urged. Coming to body contouring, she said, "Earlier, we had a single machine for this purpose, depending on deep massage to partially decrease the fat. But with development of technology, we now have lasers with vacuuming and suctioning techniques, infrared, and the most dramatic of the lot—radio frequency." Turns out, radio frequency is electromagnetic waves directly targeting fat cells in our body. They also stimulate new collagen production, extremely important to complement the fat reduction. Dr Sheth mentioned that the latest lasers use ultrasound technology and the fat-cell-cooling cryo technology to give maximum benefits. "However, all these work only if your BMI (Body Mass Index) is less than 30," she cautioned, pushing those who are overweight or obese to adopt a healthier lifestyle. To that effect, Dr Sheth coaxed the audience to deduct carbohydrate content from their diet, announcing that in modern times, carbs are bigger contributors to fat accumulation than the much-villainised food fat/oil. "Sugar and white carbs like pizza, pasta, bread, potato adds immensely to your fat content. You have to see that you diet and exercise, then only will the contouring devices work on you."

Live surprise

While the audience was busy processing this treasure-trove of information, Alma Lasers floored two lucky members with a free demonstration of laser hair removal. The procedure was displayed on big screen for others to observe, but rumour goes that the excited milieu chose to throng around the performing doctor, instead of rushing out for refreshments. Now that's some enthusiasm!

Watch this space

Moved by your city's collective zeal for a healthier future? Keep an eye out for the dna-Alma Lasers wellness workshop nearest to your location. 'Vibrant Forever' is set to tour newer locations in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai and Thane—why should only some shine brighter?

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