



## Light Plus Suction Promising For Acne

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**(WebMD)** A novel approach to treating acne, which combines light therapy with skin suction, shows promise in an early trial.

In the small study, 15 patients with severe acne experienced significant improvements in their acne lesions after as few as two to three weekly treatments, researchers say.

Study researcher Gilly Munavalli, M.D., was slated to report the findings Friday at the 27th Annual Conference of the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery (ASLMS) in Grapevine, Texas.

Known as photopneumatic therapy (PPX), the new approach combines pulsed light treatment with skin suctioning using a vacuum device. Munavalli tells WebMD that the suctioning helps clean clogged pores and intensifies the effects of the light treatment by bringing oil glands closer to the skin's surface.

"The suction really unclogs the pores, which allows the oil to flow more normally to the surface," he says. "The light helps kill the bacteria that cause acne."

The treatment was recently cleared by the FDA for use in several types of acne. But because laser and light therapies are procedures and not drugs, the move did not require clinical studies showing the treatment to be effective.

The American Academy of Dermatology considers light therapies promising, but unproven, for the treatment of acne.

A position statement posted on the Academy's Web site pointed out that the data from clinical trials are, at present, limited, and that insurance companies generally do not pay for the treatments because they are considered "emerging technologies."

"With time, research, and experience, laser, and light therapies may eventually be light years ahead of traditional acne therapies," the statement reads. "... Until more is known, laser and light therapies offer an alternative for individuals whose acne has not responded to traditional acne therapies."

California dermatologist Wendy Roberts, M.D., has used laser and light to treat acne for the past three years. She considers the treatments highly effective but says the new study did little to convince her that adding suction improves outcomes.

Roberts is an assistant clinical professor of medicine at Loma Linda University Medical School, and she practices in Rancho Mirage, Calif.

"This was not a very rigorously done study," she tells WebMD. "There was no way to tell if the improvements were due to the light treatments alone."

Conventional acne treatments include topical creams and cleansers and oral and topical antibiotics.

The 15 patients included in the study had all failed to show improvement with these traditional treatments. The patients received two to four facial PPX treatments, with each 15- to 20-minute treatment delivered at one to two weeks apart.

Facial photos were taken before the start of treatment, just before each treatment session, and a month after the treatments ended to assess effectiveness.

Munavalli reported that overall acne activity was visibly noticeable after two to three treatments in most patients, with reported reduction of acne cysts, pimples, and blackheads.

No skin blistering was reported, and facial redness resolved within a few hours of treatment.

The suction plus light approach also proved to be less painful than other laser treatments, Munavalli says, because lower levels of energy are needed.

Munavalli is medical director of a dermatology clinic in Charlotte, N.C., and he is a clinical instructor of dermatology at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

He says he has used the light and vacuum approach in the treatment of about 100 acne patients, often in combination with conventional acne treatments.

By Salynn Boyles

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