

# Integrating CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima into your Plastic Surgery Practice

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Non-invasive vaginal rejuvenation is a growth category in aesthetics. In the past, the only viable options were surgical.

When my patients come in for consultations, they are looking to rejuvenate their body as a whole and not to just focus on one area. It's not unusual for patients to ask us about labial and vaginal remodeling options.

My training at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota involved vaginal reconstruction after cancer, and I regularly performed labiaplasties in practice, so adding the CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima for vaginal and labial treatments made perfect sense. I already own the family of Syneron-Candela lasers, IPL, fractional and radiofrequency machines, so adding CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima was also an easy transition.

## Patient Population

While the CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima is a relatively new addition to our practice, we consistently treat anywhere between two and six women a week. In general, 20% of our CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima patients are seeking to reverse the effects of childbirth on their vagina and/or labia. More than 50% are peri- or post- menopausal women who want relief from dryness and dyspareunia and another 20% are looking for cosmetic improvement to their external genitalia. There is some overlap between the groups with some patients pursuing internal and external treatments. Treatment is also a nice adjunct to a "Mommy Makeover" procedure.

## Treatment Protocols

There are different protocols for each condition. For internal treatments with the probe on DEEP

MODE, the various energy settings range from 40–60 J/cm<sup>2</sup> with a square pattern and a fractional density of 3–5%. Beginning at the 12 PM noon position, the probe rotates 360 degrees.

For external treatments, the patient is started out at MID to DEEP mode depending on the dyschromia and skin type and titrated up to DEEP or FUSION mode as needed.

Patients come for treatments at three to four week intervals. The typical patient, if issues are not too severe, will see benefits from two to four treatments. A surprising and unintentional benefit we are finding is the effect that treatment with CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima is having on urinary incontinence. We did not initially present the treatment for that indication, but patients have been equally impressed by, and have stated they have achieved significant improvement in this functional aspect as well. They have told us that urinary incontinence improves after just one treatment.

## Patient Experience and Treatment Cost

There is very little discomfort, especially with the internal treatments and downtime is minimal. I was hesitant to believe that the procedure could be so comfortable but there are consistent comments from my patients that they "hardly felt it." For the external labia treatment, we have found that pre-treatment with an aesthetic cream—similar to those applied when using laser on the face—makes it a comfortable experience for the patient.

Every single patient has given positive reviews: some after just one treatment. After the initial awkwardness of asking about or

having a procedure performed on their private parts, they seem to enjoy reporting their results. We explain that this is a new technology and we welcome feedback from all of our patients.

In terms of what to charge for CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima, bundling seems to be the best approach. We separate the CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima into internal and external treatments. Each treatment is \$1,500, but both together are \$2,500, which offers patients a slight savings.

## Marketing and ROI

Word-of-mouth is a strong marketing tool for this technology. Several women have already told their girlfriends about the treatment. Most patients thus far have been existing patients (~90%) in the practice.

We provide in-office displays and information. We have also done an eblast to our patients and included other local service providers to create a referral network. I was also featured on BRAVO's "Real Housewives of New York City" treating a patient with a vaginal injury. We capitalized on this exposure with press releases and social media postings. The brochures and data provided by Syneron-Candela are displayed in office and are very convincing for patients.

An important thing, especially in space-challenged New York City, is the small footprint of the machine. It is easily transferred from room to room because there are no special electrical requirements beyond a normal outlet. Additionally, the cost of disposables is reasonable for the CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima application. While I always prefer reusable hand pieces in lasers, it makes sense to have a sterile, disposable hand piece for the CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima application.

CO<sub>2</sub>RE Intima helps round out the variety of procedures and treatments we already offer in our office. We are extremely pleased with the device, and our patients are as well. The procedure is quick, painless and effective for patients.

If you already own the CO<sub>2</sub>RE Aesthetic platform, the investment is less than purchasing an entirely new system. The CO<sub>2</sub>RE is a workhorse in our practice. We use it for everything from resurfacing for cosmetic applications to scar treatment after surgery and now for women's intimate health.