

Your Guide to Preventing Dark Spots (PIH)

Preparation & Recovery for Microneedling, Peels, and Morpheus8

For patients with skin prone to hyperpigmentation, we use a "Skin Priming" protocol. By using **Hydroquinone** before your treatment, we temporarily "quiet" your pigment-producing cells. This ensures that your skin heals with an even tone rather than reacting to the procedure by creating new dark patches, known as Post-Inflammatory Hyperpigmentation (PIH).

Step 1: The Priming Phase (4–6 Weeks Before)

Goal: Prepare your skin so it does not overreact to the treatment.

- **Apply Hydroquinone (HQ):** Apply a thin layer to the **entire** treatment area every night.
- **Wear Sunscreen:** This is non-negotiable. Hydroquinone increases sun sensitivity. Use a mineral SPF 30+ every morning.
- **Strengthen:** Use your prescribed Retinol as directed to help the HQ penetrate effectively.

Step 2: The "Pause" (7 Days Before)

Goal: Ensure the skin barrier is calm and intact for your procedure.

- **STOP Hydroquinone:** Discontinue use exactly **7 days** before your appointment.
- **STOP Retinols/Acids:** Discontinue all Tretinoin, Retin-A, or exfoliating acids.
- **Gentle Care:** Switch to a plain, fragrance-free cleanser and basic moisturizer.

Step 3: Post-Procedure Healing (Days 1–10)

Goal: Protect the skin while the "micro-channels" close.

- **No "Actives":** Do not use HQ, Retinols, or Acids.
- **Stay Cool:** Avoid saunas, hot yoga, or intense workouts for 72 hours. Internal heat can restimulate pigment cells.
- **Strict SPF:** Your "new" skin is highly vulnerable. Protect it from all UV exposure.

Step 4: Restarting & The "3-4 Month" Safety Rule

Goal: Prevent "rebound" pigment while avoiding long-term complications.

- **When to Restart:** You may typically resume Hydroquinone **7 to 10 days** post-treatment, but **ONLY** once all redness, peeling, and sensitivity have completely resolved.
- **⚠ IMPORTANT SAFETY LIMIT:** Do not use Hydroquinone for more than **3 to 4 months total** (including your pre-treatment time). Prolonged use beyond this window can lead to a rare but permanent blue-black skin discoloration called *Ochronosis*.
- **The "Drug Holiday":** After 4 months, you must stop HQ and switch to a non-HQ brightener for at least 2 months to allow your skin to rest.

- **Consult Your Provider: Do not restart a Hydroquinone cycle or extend your use without explicit directions from your provider.**

Quick Timeline Summary

Timeline	Action
4 Weeks Pre-Op	Start Hydroquinone nightly + Mineral SPF.
7 Days Pre-Op	STOP Hydroquinone and all Retinols.
Treatment Day	Procedure performed.
Days 1–7 Post-Op	GENTLE ONLY. No Hydroquinone.
Day 10 Post-Op	RESTART Hydroquinone (only if redness is gone).
3–4 Months Total	STOP Hydroquinone and begin your "holiday."

The "Switch" Protocol: Maintaining Your Glow Non-Hydroquinone Brighteners for Your 2-Month "Drug Holiday"

After 3–4 months of Hydroquinone (HQ) use, your skin requires a mandatory "holiday" to remain healthy and avoid long-term complications. During this 8-week break, we transition you to non-HQ brighteners. These clinical formulas do not bleach the skin; instead, they stabilize your pigment cells and provide powerful antioxidant protection to maintain your results.

Recommended Non-HQ Brightening Options

We recommend the following medical-grade options from **ZO® Skin Health** and **Alastin® Skincare** to keep your skin bright and even during your HQ break:

Option 1: Alastin® A-LUMINATE Brightening Serum™

- **Best For:** Stubborn hyperpigmentation and redness.
- **How it works:** A non-irritating, "retinol-free" serum that targets the pathways of unwanted pigment while supporting the skin's ability to produce new, healthy collagen and elastin.
- **Usage:** Apply 1–2 pumps twice daily (morning and night).

Option 2: Alastin® C-RADICAL Defense™ Antioxidant Serum

- **Best For:** Environmental protection and "lit-from-within" radiance.
- **How it works:** This is a stabilized form of Vitamin C (Sodium Ascorbate) that helps reduce the appearance of dark spots while protecting the skin against free radicals and blue light.
- **Usage:** Apply 1 pump every morning before your SPF.

Option 3: ZO® Skin Health - Brightalive®

- **Best For:** General brightening and preventing new spots.
- **How it works:** Uses specialized peptides and enzymes to block the triggers of pigment production without the use of harsh chemicals or retinols.
- **Usage:** Apply 1–2 pumps twice daily (morning and night).

Mandatory Safety Reminders

- **Respect the Limit:** Do not use Hydroquinone for more than **3 to 4 months total**. Overuse can lead to a rare, permanent skin darkening called *Ochronosis*.
 - **Wait for Orders:** Do not restart Hydroquinone or use a leftover prescription without explicit directions from your provider.
 - **The "Sun" Rule:** Even 15 minutes of unprotected sun exposure can "wake up" your pigment cells and undo your progress. Always wear SPF and a hat when outdoors.
 - **Benzoyl Peroxide:** Do not use at the same time as Hydroquinone
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