

Escalation Decision Tree

What to do if a client reaction occurs

Immediate rule

If you are uncertain, pause the treatment.

Step 1: Stop and assess

- Stop the laser immediately
- Ask the client what they are feeling
- Look for visible skin changes
- Do not continue to “see if it improves”

If skin appears normal and discomfort feels typical, continue cautiously or end treatment early

If skin appears abnormal or pain is sharp or increasing, move to classification

Step 2: Classify the reaction

A. Mild reaction

Temporary redness
Follicular swelling (normal bumps)
Warmth similar to sun exposure
Expected sensitivity

Action

Cool the area
Apply normal post-care
Document in chart
Finish or shorten treatment

B. Moderate reaction

Excessive redness
Heat lasting more than a few minutes
Uneven swelling
Localized irritation beyond follicles

Action

Stop treatment
Cool for 10–15 minutes
Take photos
Notify leadership
Contact medical director if unsure

C. Severe reaction

- Blistering
- Skin whitening or gray appearance
- Burn odor
- Broken skin
- Rapid swelling
- Severe pain

Action

- Stop treatment immediately
- Cool gently (do not ice directly)
- Take clear photos
- Contact medical director immediately
- Provide client care instructions
- Complete incident report

D. Emergency reaction

- Difficulty breathing
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Signs of allergic reaction

Action

- Call emergency services
- Then notify medical director
- Then notify leadership

Documentation requirements

- Always document what happened
- Record settings used
- Record treatment area
- Record timing of reaction
- Attach photos
- Record who was notified and when

Client communication guidance

- Stay calm and confident
- Do not assign blame
- Explain that reactions are rare but taken seriously
- Provide written aftercare instructions
- Schedule follow-up contact

Golden rule

When in doubt, stop and escalate — never continue treatment to test the skin.