

Look years younger with a chemical peel

By Tresa Erickson

If you've noticed age marching across your face, and fine lines, wrinkles and age spots cropping up everywhere, you may want to schedule an appointment with a plastic surgeon to discuss your options, including chemical peels.

Because they bleach the skin somewhat, chemical peels work best for fair-haired, fair-skinned people. However, individuals with darker hair and skin may also have a chemical peel.

There are three general types of chemical peels: Alpha hydroxy acids (AHA), trichloroacetic acid (TCA) and phenol. These can be done in various stages and strengths.

AHA chemical peels use glycolic, lactic or fruit acids to improve the look and feel of facial skin, making it brighter and smoother. They work best for treating acne, dryness, fine wrinkles and uneven pigmentation. Recovery is quick. Side effects may include crustiness, irritation, redness and stinging.

TCA chemical peels use trichloroacetic acid to improve the look and feel of facial skin, making it fresher and smoother. They work best for treating fine wrinkles, pigment problems and superficial blemishes. Recovery is fairly quick. Side effects may include

crustiness, irritation, redness, stinging and swelling.

Phenol chemical peels use phenol to dramatically improve the look and feel of facial skin. They work best for treating blotchiness, coarse wrinkles, damaged skin and pre-cancerous growths. Because of the strength of the treatment, recovery can take several months. The results, however, generally last for a long time. Side effects may include crustiness, irritation, redness, stinging and swelling. Patients may be restricted to a liquid diet for a few days.

Although some states do not require a professional to have a medical degree to perform a chemical peel, patients should look for a qualified plastic surgeon. The surgeon will be able to examine the patient's face and determine the best course of treatment. It could be a series of AHA chemical peels or one phenol peel.

A surgeon will also advise the patient on the risks involved and prepare the patient for what lies ahead.

Because they involve the use of chemicals, peels can be painful. Should you decide to get one, make sure you know what you are getting into. They are a bit more involved than your average facial. When all is said and done, however, you will look and feel years younger. □



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