

*By Dr John Kippen*

## *Renewing your skin*

*Facial peels and microdermabrasion can both sound rather daunting, but you'll be amazed at the rejuvenating results.*

**D**on't faint, but a facial peel basically strips away the outer layer of the skin using a chemical solution. The chemicals present in the facial peel progressively dissolve the outer skin layers, leaving new skin looking fresher, firmer and appearing younger. Collagen in the skin, which is the element that stimulates the growth of new skin cells, is also stimulated and tightened.

Peels can vary in intensity and be superficial, medium, deep or a combination of all three. When



considering a facial peel to rejuvenate your complexion, it's important to realise that as the depth of treatment increases, so does the discomfort, time of recovery and potential risks.

It's fair to say that deeper treatments have longer lasting results. Textural skin changes, pigmentation and blotchiness, as well as genetic markings such as freckles all have the capacity to be removed using a deep facial peel. Any deep-seated wrinkles or masses of fine lines can also be treated. However, before contemplating this type of procedure, it's important to be aware of what is involved.

Before a peel the skin is prepared with treatments containing retinoids, alphahydroxy acids or hydroquinones. These soften and prepare the skin ready for the effects of the facial peel chemicals.

During the peel the chemicals are applied, left for a time and then neutralised and removed.

Depending on the depth of the facial peel treatment, there may be various side effects. These include stinging, burning, redness, swelling, tenderness,



crusting and scabs. Prior to a facial peel, especially a deep-seated one, you should sit down with your cosmetic surgeon and have these side effects and their duration properly explained to you, so you can make a considered judgement as to the depth of the treatment you wish to undertake. A patient should notify their surgeon prior to treatment any previous history of cold sores.

As would be expected, the intensity of the side effects of a facial peel are usually depth related. They may also include bleaching or pigmentation of the skin, infection and scarring. It's important for patients to note that deep peels may need between one and three weeks for a full recovery and resolution of scabbing and redness.

Your surgeon may prescribe antibiotics and antiviral medication to alleviate side effects and promote healing. For long term care of the skin following this procedure, careful and thorough moisturising and sun protection are very important.

In spite of the potential side effects, a facial peel can deliver outstanding

results in terms of rejuvenating the skin. The new skin layers revealed by the peel are fresher, smoother, more evenly textured and in essence, younger looking. When appropriately used, peels are very effective and safe but always consult a qualified and experienced cosmetic or plastic surgeon before undertaking this procedure.

### **Microdermabrasion**

If the process associated with facial peels isn't to your liking, you could try microdermabrasion instead. This is a safe, non-surgical treatment whereby a jet of micro-crystals or a medically sterile abrasive surface is used to abrade the skin's surface. Skin cells are suctioned away and the exfoliating action of the abrasion removes dead cells, deep cleans and cleans pores. Microdermabrasion may also stimulate the production of collagen and elastin which helps firm the skin.

The process is safe on all skin types, chemical free and results are rapid. It can treat skin that is sun damaged, scarred, rough or wrinkled and can also

remove the visible signs of pigmentation. The resulting skin is softer, firmer and younger looking. However, microdermabrasion cannot treat deep acne scars or severe sun damage.

After a treatment skin can have minor flushing, mild redness and may feel a little hot. Deep treatments may also result in some swelling.

Make-up and exercise should be avoided on the day of treatment. Sun avoidance and protection is very important and after treatments, the skin should be moisturised regularly.

Treatments usually take 30-45 minutes, depending on the size of the area that is treated. A course of microdermabrasion treatments usually take place weekly for 4 to 6 weeks, followed by maintenance treatments at 4 to 6 week intervals. [\[2\]](#)

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