

## **Chemical Peel information and instructions**

Chemical peel is a procedure that can improve wrinkled, scarred, or sun damaged skin. It is more effective on skin with mild acne scarring, freckles, age spots, irregular pigmentation and fine lines caused by age or the sun. Rough patches called keratoses can also be removed with the chemical peel.

During this procedure, chemical agents that remove the damaged skin's outer layer are applied. Thin scabs form over the treated areas within 2-3 days and fall off a few days later revealing smoother, younger-looking skin. Mild acne scarring, fine lines, some types of irregular pigmentation, and other minor skin blemishes will be minimised, and the "new" skin will be smooth and fresh looking. Three types of chemical peel are available: a light peel, which is used to lighten superficial age spots and fine wrinkles; a medium peel, for more advanced sun-damaged skin and age lines; and a deep peel which uses phenol to help correct more severe conditions. Your doctor will determine which technique will be best suited to you.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN?**

The chemical peel takes about 30 to 45 minutes. Anaesthesia is not needed but very occasionally a light sedative can be given by mouth to relax you prior to procedure. After your skin is cleaned with an antibacterial cleanser and your eyes and hair are protected, the chemical is applied to a small area of your face with gauze or a cotton bud. This process is then repeated to the other areas of your face.

Few side effects are associated with the lighter chemical peels. You may experience a mild to moderate burning sensation, which will last a few minutes, whilst the doctor applies the solution. After the procedure your skin will feel like it has

been sunburned. The skin will be blue grey from the dye, and red underneath as the dye is washed off. Some swelling is likely for the first one or two days. Your face will feel tight and thin scabs begin to appear during the next 2 to 5 days. You may experience some tingling and slight itching as these scabs form and your skin heals. You can help speed the healing process by following the aftercare advice your doctor will recommend. Your "new" skin will have a pink cast, which will fade within 4 to 6 weeks. For several months following the procedure you should wear a sunscreen whenever you are outdoors and avoid exposing your face to direct sunlight.

### **THE RESULTS**

The chemical peel is very effective in minimising fine wrinkles, superficial scars, age spots, some pigmentation problems, and other minor skin irregularities. The new skin exposed by the peel is tight and smooth, which gives you a younger and fresher appearance.

Most patients who undergo this procedure are pleased with the results, and many patients experience a significant improvement in their skin's appearance. Depending upon the extent and the depth of the skin condition to be treated, some patients may require more than one treatment to achieve maximum results. Multiple lighter chemical peels, repeated every 1-2 months is safer and more effective than performing a single deep chemical peel.

### **BEFOREHAND**

Follow the skin conditioning programme as prescribed by your doctor. This involves the use prescription creams for 4 to 16 weeks and prepares your skin for the chemical peel, so that

the effects are maximised, the healing process shortened, and the risk of side effects minimised. Take all medications as prescribed *prior* to treatment. These may include an antibiotic, an antiviral (if you have a history of cold sores), and a sedative (e.g. Valium).

Wash your face thoroughly on the morning of the procedure and do not apply any moisturisers or other cosmetics.

Wear no makeup to the clinic. Be sure eyelashes are free of mascara.

Wash your hair the night before or on the morning of surgery.

Get a good night's sleep. Eat a *light* breakfast or lunch on the day of the peel.

Contact lenses must be removed before the peel. If you wish to remove them in the clinic, please bring your case.

Wear loose clothes that either zip or button and do not have to be pulled over your head.

Do not wear any jewellery to the clinic on the day of surgery.

Arrange for a ride to and from the clinic. You will not be allowed to drive, since your face may be swollen.

You may apply a topical anaesthetic agent to the area(s) to be treated for 1 hour prior to your visit. This will be prescribed by your doctor if needed, and may be purchased at your local pharmacy.

Obtain a bland emollient (e.g. Cetaphil moisturising cream, Aqueous cream, see below) from your local pharmacy prior to surgery to use at home after the peel.

Be sure to discuss with the doctor any history of herpes infection (cold sores) or allergies to medications and review all medicines being taken or used.

## **AFTERCARE**

Go home and relax.

Do not be alarmed if swelling appears around your eyes and mouth, it subsides gradually within 1-2 days. To help reduce this natural swelling sit up as much as possible and sleep in a head-elevated position by using 2 or 3 pillows the first few nights.

For pain relief you can take paracetamol every 3 to 4 hours as needed but no aspirin or Ibuprofen. The burning sensation may last for several hours

but eases gradually. Continue any other medications as prescribed.

Soak your face four times a day with a 0.25% acetic acid solution compress made of 1 tablespoon of white vinegar in 1 pint of warm water, and then apply a bland emollient (e.g. Cetaphil moisturising cream, Aqueous cream etc). The emollient is applied liberally to keep the skin moist throughout the day (reapply as necessary) and at bedtime. The skin should not be allowed to dry out.

You may shower daily, but avoid the treated areas for 3 days. After 3 days, the face may be washed gently with a mild, non-detergent cleanser and rinsed lightly with water but the skin should not be rubbed. Use *no soap* or any other product (this includes makeup) on treated areas until skin is completely healed up. If stinging occurs when you resume using makeup, remove it and try again in 5 to 7 days. You may shampoo your hair after the third postoperative day but avoid water or shampoo running onto treated areas. For men, no shaving for 5 to 7 days. Avoid Retin-A and glycolic acid products until your skin has completely healed up.

Avoid any unnecessary touching or rubbing of the face. Scratching and peeling at scabs may cause scars or hyperpigmentation. Clip any loose scabs with scissors.

Avoid physical exertion for 1-2 weeks so as not to perspire. Also avoid exposure to strong wind and extreme cold for 2 weeks.

Your new skin will appear red. This is normal and should be expected.

Any excessive redness, tenderness, swelling, pus or bleeding should be reported immediately to our clinic at 0207 435 7521.

After the skin is healed up, a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher must be applied daily when outdoors. Direct sun exposure *must* be avoided completely for at least 3 months postoperatively because of the increased photosensitivity and pigmentation of the chemically peeled areas.

Your first postoperative visit should be between 7 and 14 days following the procedure. You should be seen again in the office 6 weeks after your peel for another checkup.