

Appeeling skin

Facial peels used to cause everything from redness to an ugly scab. No longer. **Dr Peter Forrester**, an expert in cosmetic medicine, extols the virtues of the latest generation of treatments

Cleopatra, it has long been believed, maintained her beauty by bathing in milk. And, in all probability, the story is more than just hot air. For milk contains lactic acid, an alpha-hydroxy acid which is an active component of modern skin treatments and facial peels.

A facial peel is a treatment designed to remove the damaged surface layers of skin, enabling fresher healthy skin to grow through. Often referred to as chemical peels, many peel solutions are in fact based on plant and milk acids. The recent resurgence of interest in them stems from their ability to return a healthy glow to dull looking skin, revitalise skin in people with sun damage and ease wrinkles, fine lines, uneven tone, acne and scarring.

Traditionally, peels have used caustic solutions that produce significant exfoliation in a single treatment, but would often result in side-effects such as redness, irritation, unsightly scabbing and unwanted changes in pigmentation. These were impossible to conceal and would often take many days to settle, with a risk of permanent scarring. By contrast, the latest peel techniques aim to resurface the skin without excessive irritation, crusting or scabbing. The treatment takes less than half an hour and most people will return to work and other activities immediately.

The *Procedure Precision Peeling System™* embraces the latest medical research, utilising combinations of lactic, trichloroacetic, ascorbic and salicylic acids. These are self-neutralising, anti-inflammatory chemical exfoliants that

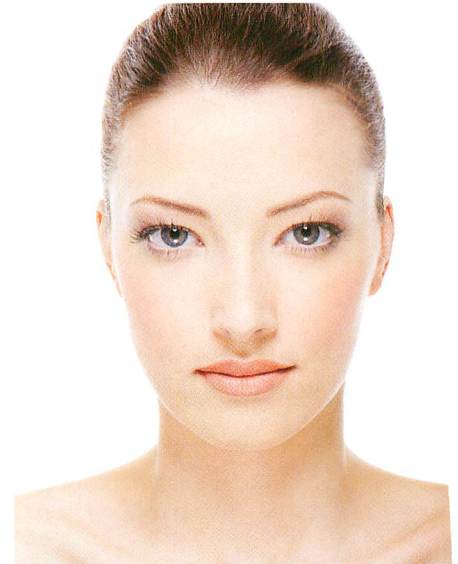
combine to resurface the dead layer of skin cells gently and speed cell turnover. A peel plan will use all four either singly or combined in layers, tailored to suit the needs of each individual's skin.

Lactic acid (AHA) is a light, superficial peel which helps to reduce fine lines and uneven pigmentation, giving an overall improvement in skin texture and tone. Over a course, there will be increased skin hydration, reduced visibility of pores and lightening of hyper-pigmentation. There is also evidence that AHAs may reduce the tendency of photo-damaged skin to develop certain forms of skin cancer.

Trichloroacetic acid (TCA) is a medium peeling agent. It can cause gentle shedding of the top layer of dead skin cells without traumatising sensitive sun-damaged skin, and helps to restore healthy skin tone and texture. Patients can expect a reduction of fine lines and superficial pigmentation, as well as softening of acne scarring.

Ascorbic acid (Vitamin C) is a mild peel ideally suited to use on pigmented skin. Used regularly, ascorbic acid peels can help resolve uneven pigmentation and provide exfoliation benefits for more reactive skin types.

Salicylic acid is a beta-hydroxy acid (BHA). These peels are used to target skin prone to pore blockages and breakouts. BHA is attracted to the lipid content of skin – particularly sebum – found mainly in follicles, and this helps to unclog pores, reducing blackheads and spots. BHA peels assist in the treatment of acne and excess surface oil.



Application of the peel solutions may result in some tingling or stinging, but this subsides very quickly. Side-effects are minimal; some people experience some redness, but this is mild and of short duration. Certain peels may not cause visible peeling, but instead induce a gentle exfoliation. With most, however, some mild peeling, flaking and dryness may occur, usually between two and five days after treatment. This usually responds well to the application of moisturiser and/or sun screen.

A course of up to six peels may be required for optimum results.

■ Dr Forrester has over 20 years of experience in cosmetic medicine. For general enquiries and appointments in Esher call: (01372) 465014. For appointments in Teddington: (020) 8943 2424. For further information visit: www.drforrester.co.uk