

CHEMICAL PEEL

Notes for guidance

One of the first things people notice about you is your face - perhaps that's why we are so concerned with improving and enhancing the look of our faces and with combating anything that might make us look less appealing to others. Whether you have fine wrinkles developing on parts of your face, acne scars, or even uneven skin coloration, you may want something more long-lasting than makeup to cover these problems and to increase your self-confidence. That's why many men and women are choosing to have a Chemical or TCA Peel.

Is a Chemical Peel right for you?

A Chemical Peel is not the right choice for everyone. If you have deep creases in your face, for example, a peel may not be effective at eliminating them, and issues with drooping skin or eyelids also won't be helped by a chemical peel. However, skin problems which affect mainly the upper levels of your skin, such as light wrinkles and some scarring, can be significantly improved with the help of these procedures. You may also want to consider a chemical peel if you have severe problems with acne which have been successfully treated using other methods.

What is a Chemical Peel?

A chemical peel is a generic term used to describe a process in which chemicals are applied to the skin, usually the face, in order to remove the outer layers and to expose the newer, fresher layers beneath. Three types of chemicals are used most frequently for these procedures: phenol, alcohahydroxy acids (AHAs), or trichloroacetic acid (TCA). A TCA peel is a medium-strength chemical which can correct problems which go somewhat deeper than the surface layers, but it is not as strong as phenol.

Regardless of the type of chemicals being used in your peel, your procedure will probably be done in your physician's office or in an outpatient facility. If you're having an AHA chemical peel, the discomfort is so minimal that you probably won't even need to be sedated. Of course, these peels can not deal with very deep facial problems. With a phenol or TCA peel, you will need a light sedative to keep you relaxed but that's all. The chemicals actually anesthetize your skin, so no other medication is needed.

Are you a good candidate?

While chemical peels can be a safe, non-surgical way to eliminate some wrinkling, as well as other types of skin problems, these procedures are not a good choice for everyone. For example, if you have very deep wrinkling, you might be better off choosing a treatment such as Restylane instead of having multiple peels done to improve the problem. Your physician will give you an individual consultation, to discuss with you the best options for correcting the problems you see in your skin.

As with almost all cosmetic surgeries, the best candidates are healthy individuals. Skin infections, herpes, and certain types of scarring should not have chemical peels. Also, you should not have a chemical peel if you are still recovering from recent surgery. Not smoking before the procedure is also advised, in order to avoid complications during the procedure itself and during the healing process.

How is the procedure performed?

Often before you have a chemical peel your physician will have you pre-treat your skin with either an AHA chemical or Retin A. The use

of these chemicals beforehand makes it easier for the AHA, TCA, or phenol to work on the skin. You'll need to follow your physician's guidelines carefully if you want to get the best results from the treatment.

Chemical peel procedures vary slightly depending on the type of chemical being used. However, all of the procedures begin with a thorough cleansing on the face. After your face has been cleaned, your physician will apply the chemical. For AHA and TCA peels, nothing else will be needed at that time. For phenol peels, your physician will probably apply some type of protective covering to your face, such as waterproof tape or petroleum jelly, before you leave the office. If you're having your entire face treated, then the procedure will last 10 to 15 minutes for AHA or TCA chemicals or 1 to 2 hours for phenol treatments.

Once you return home, you will probably be required to apply an ointment to your face regularly in order to protect it and to expedite the healing process. Often a crusty covering will grow over the skin – although this doesn't sound very appealing, the crust actually provided additional protection for your very sensitive skin. Your physician will remove the crust during one of your follow-up visits.

How long will it take before I feel normal again?

Your ability to return to a normal routine after a peel depends on which chemicals are used. Because AHA chemicals are the most mild, you will probably be able to return to work and your other activities within 24 hours or less. Your face will be red and may be dry, but you shouldn't have any other significant discomfort. That is not the case with all peels; with TCA peels, your face may swell up some and your face may ache for up to a week. You will probably require at least ten days before you can go back to work and to your routine.

Phenol chemical peels are the strongest and, therefore, may take the longest to recover from. After the procedure, your face will turn a bright red color and may become so swollen you'll be required to consume only liquids because you won't be able to open your lips enough for solid food. With this procedure, you'll need to be off from work and taking it easy for at least two weeks.

Regardless of the chemical peel you have, you'll need to be extra careful when spending time in the sun. Your sensitive skin will be at great risk for sun damage and other serious problems, so you'll need to either stay inside or use a sufficiently strong sunscreen on your face when outdoors. Even after you're feeling back to normal, you'll need to use sunscreen on your face every day for at least six months.

Are there any risks?

Chemical peels, especially those done with AHA and TCA, are quite safe. However, there are some possible risks. One of the most common complications is a change in the coloring of all or part of the face. This is known as hypopigmentation or hyperpigmentation. Some change is normal and will go away on its own. In some cases, however, the changes are permanent.

Phenol treatments are normally the most risky because they involve a very strong chemical. Some patients have reported a burning sensation that lasts up to 6 hours after the procedure is completed. Plus, the risks of developing permanent hypopigmentation or hyperpigmentation are greater with phenol peels. Phenol poisoning can be another risk that occurs when inexperienced practitioners handle the treatment incorrectly. Because phenol is toxic and because it is absorbed into the body during the peel, the practitioner must monitor you carefully to make sure the chemicals are quickly leaving your body.

Will I be happy with my results?

If you had realistic expectations for the type of chemical peel you chose, then you should be happy with the results of the procedure after the discomfort and discoloration wear off. Remember that to preserve those results, you may need to repeat the procedure every few months.

Further Information

This brochure has been prepared to give a basic understanding of the procedure before a consultation takes place, and to cover many of the questions frequently asked about this type of cosmetic surgery. Final decisions should not be made until an individual assessment has taken place with the surgeon.

There is no obligation on the part of the patient to undergo surgery by attending for consultation.

If you have any further questions or would like to arrange a consultation please fill in the online form on our website at www.surgeryone.co.uk. All enquiries are always treated confidentially.