

Chemical Peels Explained

By Esthetician Sandra Lundeen

Chemical peels have a long history. It is said that Cleopatra, one of history's most celebrated beauties, regularly bathed in sour milk (lactic acid) to keep her skin soft and supple. Vineyard peasants of the past looked forward to soft feet after stomping grapes to extract the juice (tartaric acid).

The medical profession has used chemical peels composed of different types of acid formulas over the last century to treat skin conditions like scars, serious acne and deeply wrinkled skin. These peels have a range of strengths depending on the changes needed. Some are formulated for deep penetration resulting in surface wounding and can involve discomfort as well as downtime for healing and recovery.

With the growth of the skin care industry over the past 15 years, new and milder types of peel formulas have been developed for medical settings as well as the spa industry. The goal is to improve and enhance the skin surface by sloughing the dead cells of the stratum corneum and encourage new cells to make collagen and elastin in the deeper layers of skin. These milder peels result in little or no downtime afterward and are often referred to as "lunchtime" peels.

Temporary redness and mild skin peeling can potentially occur for the first few days following application. The most common chemical peels use alpha or beta hydroxy acids and are derived from fruit (apples, grapes) sugar cane, and willow bark.

My clients frequently ask the question "Would I benefit from a chemical peel?" The answer is usually yes! Because of the large range of formulas and graduated peel strengths available, even sensitive skin types can receive benefit for this type of exfoliation. Acne, fine lines and wrinkles, hyperpigmentation and melasma, are conditions that can be improved by chemical peels. Prior to a peel, a consultation and skin analysis will help determine if you're a good candidate for this type of treatment or if there are other options better suited for your goals.

On average, five to six peels are performed two weeks apart. However, the answer will depend on your skin and your goals, as well as potential input from your dermatologist. During the consultation and analysis a plan will be created for the best possible outcome.

Using appropriate skin care products before, during, and after a peel is an important part of your overall results. Products with active ingredients and an appropriate moisturizer, as well as a full spectrum sunscreen, will often be recommended. Many of the problems we are attempting to correct or improve with chemical peels are a result of photoaging. Even though UVB radiation is less intense in the winter months in the Midwest, UVA and infrared are with us year round. If it isn't yet part of your routine, make daily sunblock your BFF!

Esthetician Sandra Lundeen has nearly two decades of experience providing quality esthetic services. She sees clients at our Eagan and Woodbury offices. Please schedule your next visit with Sandra Lundeen by calling our Eagan office at 651-251-3300 or our Woodbury office at 651-578-2700.