

Patty Reiman

# PEEL APPEAL

*The Fountain of Youth for your skin may be just a peel (or two) away*

**W**hile the phrase “chemical peel” might sound like a laboratory experiment gone wrong, in the world of facial rejuvenation the chemical peel can brighten and freshen the skin in a fairly painless procedure that is comparative to simply having a facial. And given its moderate price tag and relatively quick and effective results, many of us are turning to the chemical peel to address the skin issues that plague us.

For Rhonda LeMaire it was age spots and razor bumps from unwanted facial hair. This 39-year-old woman today is 100 percent satisfied with her Jessner chemical peel treatments.

Her husband noticed improvement the next day, and she says her face is, “Smooth like a baby’s butt,” and looks 20 years younger. Seeing such dramatic changes so quickly from a facial process and at a reasonable cost has turned this skeptic into a satisfied patient. “I wasn’t sure it would work, but I have no disappointments,” says Rhonda.

## PICK OF THE PEEL

Most often, chemical peels are used to treat sun-damaged skin with mild wrinkling, uneven skin tone and acne scarring. Results include a more even skin tone, tighter skin and less acne and/or acne scars. And we’re not talking just about your face. Peels are also appropriate for the chest, back, arms and hands.

For Rhonda, the medium-strength Jessner peel was for the bumps caused by ingrown hairs under her chin. After the first peel, she noticed redness and felt a burning sensation for a couple of hours but did not experience these after subsequent peels and combined laser treatments.

Nedra Dodds, MD, a cosmetic surgeon in Kennesaw, Ga., says chemical peels can be classified as superficial, medium or deep. The superficial to medium peels can treat uneven skin tones and skin scarring. For instance, you might consider a chemical peel if you have hyperpigmentation (dark skin patches), often indicative of a skin condition called melasma, which is a common, benign disorder often seen in pregnant women. Chemical peels are also good for post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, which is a skin darkening that is the result of injury or certain skin disorders such as with acne scars.

Although chemical peel formulations vary in “strength” and work by exfoliating the skin’s top layers, don’t be put off by the term. Strength of treatment can vary according to your skin type, extent of skin damage and what you’re having treated:

- AHA (alphahydroxy acid) peels are lighter peels with a concentration of 30 to 70 percent—much stronger than over-the-counter AHA formulations of 10 percent
- TCA (trichloroacetic acid) peels are deeper, more aggressive peels for significant skin flaws, such as acne scarring
- Phenol peels are possibly THE strongest and treat very deep wrinkles and severe aging of the skin

While Rhonda had a medium-strength Jessner peel, Dr. Dodds says more layers can make it a medium to deep peel. “Deeper chemical peels address severe sun damage, wrinkles around the mouth and eyes and aid in treatment of acne scars,” says Dr. Dodds.

The deeper the peel, the better the results, the longer the recovery time. But for many patients, it’s a multiple-treatment process. “Several treatments are usually needed for



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Photography by Tommy Chung



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acne scars, and ongoing prescription products for chronic conditions like melasma,” explains Peter P. Rullan, MD, who leads the Dermatology Institute in Chula Vista, Calif.

The chemical compound then penetrates the skin’s layers and breaks up the bonds in the skin, which causes the damaged layers to peel and flake off. Typically, these loosened layers are home to the superficial wrinkles we don’t want and contain damaged melanocytes (the pigment-producing cells that give skin its color) that cause discoloration of the skin.

The third and final step is stopping the chemical process and preparing the skin to heal. Your doctor may provide a topical product to protect your skin and promote healing. “Moisturization is key to healing and to keep areas from demarcation and scarring,” says Dr. Dodds.

### COSMETIC COMBO

Dr. Rullan considers combination peels a better choice over older TCA and phenol peels. The combo peels have

lighter concentrations of individual chemicals, which reduces toxicity and can speed up healing time because their combined agents work so well together.

Rhonda’s Jessner peel was a combination of esorcinol, salicylic acid and lactic acid. “Besides directly injuring the skin in varying ways, these agents can also affect melanin production and improve cell function,” says Dr. Rullan.

Both Drs. Dodds and Rullan use chemical peels in combination with other facial rejuvenation techniques. Dr. Dodds often rotates chemical peels with laser treatments to shrink and tighten skin and pores. Dr. Rullan incorporates lasers as well as volumetric fillers or lip enhancements.

Case in point, four weeks after her peel, Rhonda received her first laser hair-removal treatment to reduce the very hairs that caused the problem to begin with. As she was told from the beginning by Dr. Dodds, “This is a process not a procedure, and tincture of time will be your best friend.”

### Skin Solutions

Dr. Rullan notes a variety of chemical peels are available to address different skin issues:

#### Got Wrinkles?

A high-strength VI peel is in order (9% Phenol, 9% Trichloroacetic, 9% Salicylic, followed by tretinoin and vitamin C), which will also tighten the skin. Normal strength works for mild photodamage and melasma.

#### Got Dark Spots?

The Melanage peel is spot on (azelaic, phytic, arbutin and kojic acids mixed with tretinoin 1% with up to 14% hydroquinone followed by a triple bleach cream at home). Importantly, protection from heat and sun is crucial to maintaining results.

#### Got Acne?

For superficial acne scars? Trichloroacetic acid (concentration ranges from 65% to 100%).

If you’ve got active acne or mild discoloration, a 30% salicylic acid peel will do.

#### Got Mature Skin?

Fruity acid/buffered glycolic (70% concentration with 30% salicylic acid) will provide skin with plumpness and glow.

### BEAUTY BRIEF

PROCEDURE: CHEMICAL (JESSNER) PEEL

- COST:** \$200 to \$800 (depending on geographic location and number of layers applied)
- TIME IN:** 1 hour
- TIME OUT:** Take two days off (for aggressive peel)
- ANESTHESIA:** None
- PAIN:** A cool pack and Tylenol will do
- INVASIVE?** Knife-free

OLD YOU



NEW YOU



Female patient with hyperpigmentation under her chin and side of her face from Pseudofolliculitis barbae (razor bumps) shown before and five weeks after a Jessner’s Peel, laser treatment and microdermabrasion. Note how the dark spots have lightened and the skin texture has improved.

Before and after courtesy of: Dr. Nedra Dodds