



Acid Test

Can a chemical peel cure “chicken skin”? Associate beauty editor ALESSANDRA FORESTO finds out.

Tired of hiding my upper arms under cardigans every summer, this year I marched into my dermatologist’s office at the first sign of spring. “Scrubs and lotions aren’t cutting it,” I said, lifting my sleeve to show Meghan O’Brien, MD, of Tribeca Park Dermatology, the pimple-like bumps along my triceps. “I need the big guns.”

My problem: keratosis pilaris. In addition to the annoying bumps—caused when skin cells called keratinocytes accumulate and plug hair follicles—I had developed noticeable dark patches.

O’Brien suggested a chemical peel to lift away the upper layers of skin, clearing out the hair follicles and removing excess pigment. She used a



mix of trichloroacetic, retinoic, and salicylic acids called VI Peel (a good choice for darker skin tones like mine). After she wiped on the mildly tingly acid solution, she waited two minutes before neutralizing it with a towelette soaked in retinoic acid and vitamin C.

Within hours, the skin turned alarmingly dark and started flaking. By day four, it was coming off in sheets. But finally, after ten days of intense peeling, my arms were smooth, even-toned, and tank-top-ready. The doctor says I may be bump-free for months—possibly longer if I use a prescription 40 percent urea foam lotion daily and a retinoid cream twice a week. (\$300 to \$500 per treatment; vipeel.com for physicians) **★ Do it if you...have tried at-home exfoliation to no avail (and are prepared for serious molting).**

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