

# THINKING ABOUT A CHEMICAL PEEL

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## Introduction

This information leaflet tells you all about chemical peels. It will tell you what a chemical peel is, what it can do for your complexion, how it is performed and how you can prepare your face for a peel so that you can get the maximum benefit from the procedure. It will also inform you of the risks and aftercare involved during the recovery period.

## What is a chemical peel

A chemical peel is a procedure to remove the top layer of dead skin cells and some of the living skin cells at the very top of your skin. There are several types of chemical peels but all peels remove the top layers of the skin, to reveal new skin underneath which grows back as a younger fresher skin. Some peels are thin and some peels are thick – thin peels are referred to as superficial peels, and thick peels are referred to as deeper peels. There are three general types of peels – superficial, intermediate and deep peels. All peels usually need to be repeated and all have the same side effects. Most peels will not remove all your skin damage but they should all make you look fresher for a while.

The most superficial peels are with substances such as glycolic acid and this is found in many over the counter preparations and peels performed by beauticians. These have a short recovery time and have a mild but noticeable effect which should last several weeks.

The intermediate peels are performed with trichloroacetic acid, or TCA as it is known. TCA peels can be concentrated or diluted according to how deep we want to go, and several layers of peel can be given to go a little deeper if necessary for your skin requirements. I usually use 20-30% for most people and use one to four passes depending on how much time you have to recover and what effect you are looking to achieve. The recovery time is a little longer than the more superficial peels but the effects are more dramatic and last longer. Peels of this strength need to be performed by a doctor, though some weaker solutions of TCA peels can be performed by nurses.

The deepest peels are performed using lasers and phenol. Phenol is generally no longer used because some of it is absorbed and can be toxic, but is very effective at giving a deep peel in those facilities that do not use lasers. Deep peels can be very effective for more intensive treatment requirements, but the recovery time is longer and there are more side effects to consider. Laser treatments should only be performed on the recommendation of a plastic surgeon (or dermatologist experienced in lasers).

## What can a peel do for me

Chemical peels are best used for treatment of mild to moderate skin problems. They work particularly well to restore sun damaged skin and can help with very fine lines and wrinkles around the eyes and lips. A peel can help restore evenness to your complexion and should freshen your skin and can remove some of the sun damaged areas of freckling around the cheeks. When performed as part of an overall package of care for facial rejuvenation it can be considered the icing on the cake for your overall look. We want you to look your best and sometimes a chemical peel will be part of your treatment recommendation.

## TCA peels

A chemical peel using TCA can be performed in the out patient clinic and takes around 15 minutes. After the treatment someone should drive you home and you can perform your usual daily activities in shortly thereafter. During the application of the peel, you will feel a stinging sensation which is neutralised with water. After the peel is applied, your skin will become frosty white which is a good sign of the peel working.

The aftercare depends on the strength of treatment and the number of passes but usually involves the application of cold water for around 6 hours to the face via a face towel and moisturiser (eg Vaseline) thereafter for a few days until your skin stops peeling. After a few days you should notice some of the dead layer of the skin coming off in the Vaseline with fresher newer skin revealing itself below. A deeper TCA peel may need longer periods of skin care and more superficial peels will require less intensive aftercare. After your skin stops peeling and you stop using Vaseline you should go back to using your usual moisturizer.

### Preparing your face for a peel

To get the best results from the peel you can prepare your skin so that it is primed and ready for the peel. Although this is not necessary, if you have time you can do this to help the peel penetrate a little more deeply and give you the maximum effect of the peel. You may want to consider using the following skin preparation timetables

	<b>Morning</b>	<b>Night time</b>
One week before your peel – every day for one week	Daily Clinique exfoliating facial scrub for men	Daily Clinique exfoliating facial scrub for men
On the day of your peel	Use a light alcohol free cleanser	Vaseline
Peel day +1-4	Light cleanser followed by Vaseline	Light cleanser followed by Vaseline
Peel day +4-7 (when your skin stops peeling)	Light cleanser followed by light moisturiser	Light cleanser followed by light moisturizer
Days 7-14	Light cleanser followed by light moisturizer	Clinique exfoliating facial scrub for men followed by light moisturizer
Daily thereafter	Light cleanser followed by light moisturizer	Light cleanser followed by light moisturizer
Weekly thereafter	Light cleanser followed by light moisturizer	Clinique exfoliating facial scrub for men followed by light moisturizer
3-6 monthly	Consider a further chemical peel	

### Maintaining your new complexion

Maintaining your new look should be with a combination of the aftercare in the above options and the occasional chemical peel. Peels usually need to be repeated regularly as each time there is a mild to moderate effect on the skin. Usually you will need more than one peel but with several peels the deepest skin damage may not be completely removed by a chemical peel. A light chemical peel can be more effective than a deep beautician's facial and the two treatments can be used well together.

### The risks of a peel

Most chemical peels go very well but with all medical treatments there are some risks. These include:

- skin infections which may be the cause of scarring
- pinpoint bleeding of the skin
- creating scar tissue which may take several months to settle
- hyperpigmentation (patches of dark skin similar to mild freckling)
- hypopigmentation (patches of light skin)
- cyst formation from blockage of skin pores
- acne like spots (again from blockage of skin pores)
- incomplete resolution of your symptoms (either necessitating a repeat peel or meaning that all the skin problem cannot be corrected with a chemical peel)
- recurrence of the initial problem (for example sun spots and fine lines may reappear)

For all these reasons it is important to contact us if you have any problems after a chemical peel. We want to look after you so that you can get the best result.