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Chemical Peel Information and Side effects

A chemical peel is a cosmetic procedure typically performed to diminish fine lines and wrinkles, as well as to give skin a softer and smoother appearance. Peels generally use one or more chemical solutions—such as glycolic acid, lactic acid, or salicylic acid that are applied to the skin, according to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD). Glycolic acid, which is derived from sugar cane, is probably the most popular grade of alpha hydroxy acid (AHA) used by physicians for facial peels. Lactic acid is another alpha hydroxy acid which may also hydrate dry, flaky skin. Salicylic acid is a beta hydroxyl acid that is synthetically made. It is used for cosmetic application, but it is primarily used to treat acne. These acids and other such solutions generally cause similar side effects. However, the severity can vary considerably depending on the depth of the peel, previous treatments, and other medical conditions. Please consult your physician and inform them of any prior treatments or products that you have used on your face.

Prior to any chemical peel:

- Be sure to remove all makeup and contact lenses before the procedure.
- Alert the doctor to any medical or skin conditions, especially cold sores; use of Accutane; recent peels; or other facial procedures.
- Eat a good breakfast or lunch prior to the peel.
- Photographs may be taken prior to the peel.
- Medication may increase hyperpigmentation - please consult with your physician prior to the peel.

Redness, Flaking, and Scaling

A chemical acid peel may cause a sunburn-like sensation accompanied by redness and flaking, which can range from mild to severe based on the strength of the peel. Light or superficial chemical peels treat only the outer layer of the skin, while deeper peels reach the middle layer of the skin to clear away old, damaged skin cells. A superficial peel typically causes the treated skin to become red, which is usually followed by scaling for up to

five days, according to the AAD. Your skin may also feel tight. A gentle lotion or cream may be applied following a lactic acid peel to help soothe the skin.

Flaking, Crusting and Blistering

Swelling and blistering are possible side effects of medium and deep strength chemical peels, according to the American Society of Plastic Surgeons, or ASPS. Surgical tape may need to be placed over the treated skin in some cases. It may take a minimum one or two weeks for blisters to crust and naturally peel away. Refrain from picking at scabs or crust.

Skin Discoloration

Some people may experience temporary or permanent changes in skin color following a chemical peel, according to the AAD. Individuals with a family history of brownish face discolorations, women who have been pregnant, and women who take oral contraceptives may be more vulnerable to this side effect. The skin discoloration may take several weeks to a few months to decrease. You should avoid tanning or other forms of sun exposure. Sunscreen should be worn if out in the sun to help prevent permanent hyperpigmentation.

Infection and Scarring

Infection is an unlikely but possible side effect of chemical peels, according to FacialPlasticSurgery.Net. If you have a history of cold sores or fever blisters, check with your doctor about getting an antiviral medication prior to getting a chemical peel since an outbreak can lead to an infection and scarring if a peel has not completely healed.

If scarring does occur following a lactic acid peel, it can usually be successfully treated, notes the AAD.

Increased Sun Sensitivity

Chemical peels can increase your skin's sensitivity to the sun, so it's very important to wear sunscreen once your skin has healed. A sunscreen with a sun protection factor or SPF of 30 or higher is generally recommended by the AAD.

If any questions should arise, please contact the office at 724-941-8838.