

# Reversing sun damage

**T**HE skin, also known as the largest organ of the human body, accounts for six percent to 10% of your body weight. But what if you weren't a good girl this summer and didn't listen to all the advice on sun protection?

Visible signs of ageing from sun damage can start as early as your 20s, but it is between 35 and 49 that the damage really shows changes in your skin. So the earlier you start with sun protection, the better your chances of looking younger for longer.

Studies have shown that repeated unprotected ultraviolet exposure, even for short periods at a time, breaks down collagen. In addition, as we age, collagen production in the skin decreases and the combined effect of sun and age has a detrimental effect on our skin.

So it's all about boosting collagen in the skin.

Fortunately all is not lost – there are various treatments available to help counter the damaged and dehydrated appearance of skin. By stimulating collagen production in the skin, the elasticity will be restored and the plump appearance of the skin will return.

Dr Maureen Allem, founder and medical director of South Africa's Skin, Body and Health Renewal, says you can reverse the signs of dehydration and sun damage with treatments such as PDT (Photodynamic Therapy), Dermapen/skin-needling, Pearl laser, Limelight, Cosmelan and Dermamelan peels by mesoestetic, TCA (trichloroacetic acid) peel and their own 3D peel.

**Photo dynamic therapy (PDT):** To stimulate the deeper skin tissue of the skin, this treatment uses a

combination of visible blue and red light, as well as invisible yellow light. The right light combination must be selected for each treatment to ensure optimum results.

It can be used to:

- Soften fine lines and improve skin tone and smoothness.

- Wound healing before and after plastic surgery and ablative laser resurfacing.

- Treat precancerous skin lesions.

- Clear up a skin problem without pain or downtime.

A series of treatments will ensure maximum results.

## **Skin Needling (Dermapen):**

Dermapen/Skin Needling is based on the fact that the skin has the ability to heal itself. After our skins experience trauma like cuts or other physical trauma, old, damaged tissue is discarded and replaced with new, fresh, healthy collagen.

Skin needling is a safe and precise way to traumatise the skin to stimulate collagen, based on the above principal. It results in a smoother, firmer and younger looking skin.

The Dermapen is moved over the skin to create tiny sub-cutaneous channels. Due to the vibration of the pen, no pain is felt. The body perceives this as mini wounding and the release of growth factors are stimulated to trigger the production of collagen and elastin.

**Pearl Laser:** Pearl Laser Peel Treatment is a revolutionary technique for patients to treat the top layer of skin with light pulses in a pre-selected pattern, while the laser sends heat to the deeper layers of skin simultaneously to provide longer-term benefits. The Pearl is a great treatment for patients with any level of damage to the skin as it

can be set to treat more superficial, as well as deeper, skin problems, depending on the patient's needs.

The effects are immediately visible after just one treatment and, within about four to five days, new skin will have been formed and pigmentation, wrinkles, splotchy skin and skin texture will have been improved.

**Limelight:** This fourth-generation IPL device has specific programme selection. This means that specific programmes can be used and customised for specific conditions. Skin is rejuvenated and shows exceptional results with minimal discomfort.

**Peels:** A facial peel is a procedure that renews the skin by lifting dead cells off the surface of the skin and stimulates the regeneration and renewal of the cells underneath.

Depending on the result that is required, there are different levels (and depths) and types of peels.

You can quickly achieve substantial improvement in the appearance of superficial lines and uneven pigmentation, while making your skin look and feel softer, smoother and more radiant.

Acne scars and enlarged pores may become less noticeable, and acne breakouts may be reduced.

The skin is continually undergoing natural exfoliation. As one ages, the epidermal cell turnover slows down and one's skin becomes dull because the topmost layer consisting of dead cells becomes too thick.

This dead layer can challenge the skin, causing whiteheads, blackheads, rough texture and uneven appearance of the skin tone. The dead layer can also retard the penetration of skin

products. It is also a fact that this build-up of dead cells causes a cascade of challenges in the skin, especially with age, as the bigger the build-up, the slower and slower the skin renews itself, resulting in a vicious ageing spiral.

If one exfoliates regularly, new healthy skin cells are exposed to nutrients from the air, water and daily skin products.

These nutrients are then transported to the deeper skin cells where they are needed, improving circulation, texture, healthy collagen and elastin production.

● **Dr Allem is a general practitioner with a special interest in aesthetic and integrative anti-ageing medicine and procedures.**



There are a number of treatments available for sun damaged skin, but rule number one is always protection.