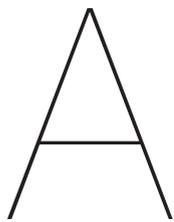


BY ELSA KRUGER

A close-up portrait of a woman's face, looking directly at the camera. Her hair is pulled back, and her eyes are a striking blue. She has a neutral expression. Two thick, white, textured strokes of cream are applied to her cheeks, starting from the inner corners of her eyes and extending downwards. The background is a plain, light grey.

# SKIN SENSE

*The key to youthful  
skin and healthy  
cell renewal  
is exfoliation*



As we grow older, so cell turnover becomes sluggish. The same skin cells that renewed themselves within 21 to 28 days in our youth now take more than double that time. By the time you are 50+, it can take anywhere between 42 and 84 days for cells to renew. The result: dull, dry skin, lacking radiance and freshness. Simply put, we lose our “glow”.

Pigmentation marks get darker, and lines and wrinkles are more pronounced as old layers of dead skin just, uhmm, *sit* there.

“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,” explains aesthetic doctor Maureen Allem from Skin Renewal.

“This dead layer can stress the skin, causing whiteheads, blackheads, rough texture and uneven appearance of the skin tone. The dead layer can also hamper the penetration of your products (that you apply daily). 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 aging spiral.”

The purpose of regular exfoliation at home, be it with a facial scrub, cleansing brush, washcloth or an enzyme-exfoliating formulation, is to get rid of dead skin cell layers, exposing the fresh new cells underneath.

“If one exfoliates regularly, new healthy skin cells are exposed to nutrients from the air, water and daily skin products,” says Allem. “These nutrients are then transported to the deeper skin cells where they are needed, improving circulation, texture, healthy collagen and elastin production, and evening out skin tone and colour.”

Yet, often, DIY simply cannot do the job effectively, especially in cases of stubborn pigmentation and other marks or scars on the skin.

Time for the big guns: chemical peels and microdermabrasion at the doctor’s rooms. You will be doing yourself and your skin a favour – these treatments not only assist in skin rejuvenation, but also in preventing premature aging.

Allem confirms: “The need for major facelifts will be much less because of the current generation of ‘skincare-aware’ individuals. Twenty-, 30- and 40-year-olds today have all of the preventive tools available to them, such as microdermabrasion and peels, which will not allow their faces to get to the stage where today’s 50- and 60-year-olds have.”

In the long term, it will save you money, too: just think how much better your expensive serums and treatments will work if they don’t have to fight their way down as much as 15 to 20 layers of dead skin cells...



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### CHEMICAL PEEL

**What it is:** A facial peel is a procedure that renews the skin by chemically lifting dead cells off the surface of the skin, and stimulating the regeneration and renewal of the cells underneath. Acne scars and enlarged pores become less noticeable, and acne breakouts may be reduced.

It is important that a programme for skin renewal is firmly built on patient-specific evaluation, says Allem. Before any treatment process is started, a doctor should assess the patient to ensure that the best programme is worked out for optimal results.

Depending on the result you need, there are different levels (and depths) and types of peels. With 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.

**What happens:** After an initial consultation, a client will be given a pigment-lightening gel, cream or serum, which must be applied to the entire face daily for 10 days before the peeling process can begin.

This down-regulates the enzyme that produces melanin and will prevent the possibility of post-inflammatory pigmentation (PIH), which can occur after any exfoliation procedure.

#### Pros:

- Fine lines and wrinkles become less apparent;
- Skin tone evens out;
- Texture becomes more refined;
- Oily or acne-prone skin is improved;
- Enlarged pores appear smaller;
- Superficial scars appear reduced;
- Skin appears healthier and more youthful;
- Pigmentation is reduced in all skin types; and
- The skin itself starts to “behave younger”.

#### Cons:

A mild redness of the skin occurs following the procedure. In most cases the skin may feel a bit tight for up to 48 hours after the procedure. Depending on the type of peel, this is followed by dark scaling that appears and then sloughs off after several days. There are peeling options available where the peeling is hardly noticeable and can be easily covered with treatment foundations.

Mild peels such as the 10% to 15% TCA may be repeated at four-week intervals until the desired clinical effect is achieved.

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#### Suitability for different skin

**types:** Superficial peels are usually suitable for all skin types, including patients with:

- Acne or sensitive skin;
- Sunspots, hormonal pigmentation or sun-damaged skin;
- Dry, aging skin;
- Oily skin with enlarged pores; and
- Acne scarring.

**Note:** All exfoliation treatments make skin more sensitive to the sun. A sunscreen of SPF30 should be used daily, and sun exposure avoided, no matter what the skin type.

**Costs:** This depends on the type of peel.

- Superficial or medium-depth peels: R250 – R750;
  - Deep peels: up to R3 000; and
  - Specialised deep peels: R6 000 – R10 000.
-

**TRY THESE:**

**1**

**Dermalogica BioSurface Peel:**

This brand-new treatment is Dermalogica's first-ever chemical peel, formulated for use in skincare centres and spas. The four-step exfoliant system is the first range of products to be introduced within Professional Expert Strength, a new line of professional products available only to licensed skincare therapists. It addresses a diverse array of conditions that include reducing skin roughness and the appearance of fine lines, as well as helping to treat hyperpigmentation, pseudofolliculitis (razor bumps) and acneic inflammation. This new procedure offers the many benefits of traditional chemical peels, but with little to no post-peel redness or downtime.

"It provides consumers with the results they desire without any recovery downtime," says Sonette Donker from Dermalogica. "We believe a chemical peel should work with the skin, not against it. The new Professional Expert Strength BioSurface Peel's uniquely multi-phase approach powerfully targets fine lines, hyperpigmentation and acne, to take skin health to a whole new depth."

**2**

**DermaQuest** has three resurfacer treatments and three chemical peels available at cosmetic doctors' rooms. Two to try are:

**Power Pumpkin Resurfacer** with Orange Stem Cells (pumpkin pulp 40%, glycolic acid 10%, lactic acid 10%, salicylic acid 2%) for lacklustre skin. Pumpkin contains vitamin C, zinc; it also has the highest content of vitamin A among all vegetables. Vitamin C and zinc remove free radicals responsible for attacking healthy cells. Vitamin A is important for anti-aging.

**Modified Jessners** with Lilac Stem Cells (salicylic acid 14%, lactic acid 14%, resorcinol 14%) offers impressive rejuvenation results, combating a variety of skin conditions including comedonal acne, excess oil, photo-damage, uneven pigmentation and superficial scarring.

**3**

**OptiPhi Skin Rejuvenation Peeling Treatment:**

This peel offers solutions to all skin conditions, by combining the regenerative capabilities of glycolic acid and intensely hydrating actives. Glycolic acid, which is classified as an alpha hydroxyl acid (exfoliating the skin from the inside out and therefore great for aging skin), has the greatest amount of clinical data available on short-term and long-term benefits, and can be used on any skin type with minimal risk of scarring. This peel can be successfully performed on individuals with dark skin.

It is perfect as a lunchtime peel, as there is no downtime, and make-up can be applied to skin straight after the peel.

The benefits of having a skin-rejuvenation peel using glycolic acid are:

- It stimulates cellular activity;
- It improves elasticity and firmness of the skin;
- It increases collagen synthesis;
- It promotes cellular turnover;
- It resurfaces the skin;
- It improves hydration levels;
- It refines enlarged pores;
- It may assist in the correction of skin pigmentation; and
- It reduces signs of aging.



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### MICRODERMABRASION

**What it is:** Microdermabrasion is a quick, no-downtime procedure that renews the skin by lifting dead cells off the skin's surface by means of a gentle polishing with crystals. It is a modern, painless, non-invasive skin-rejuvenation procedure using a combination of a fine abrasive tip or crystals and vacuum suction applied to exfoliate the skin.

Other names for this include microderm, vacubrasion, crystal-free peel, Parisian peel, and the lunchtime peel. No needles or topical anaesthetic are required for microdermabrasion.

Microdermabrasion creates superficial ablation, primarily in the epidermis, which removes the outermost dead skin cells and accelerates the rate of skin rejuvenation, explains Dr Natalie Cordeiro, aesthetic practitioner at Laserderm, Fourways. "The treatment is aimed at treating dull or sallow skin, mild acne, acne discoloration, very superficial acne scars and fine lines.

"For the typical South African patient who has concerns of photo-aging, microdermabrasion may be a preventive measure. Studies have shown that microdermabrasion facilitates the absorption of some topical medications through increasing the permeability of the skin. In this way sun damage and photo-aging may be partially decreased, and hydration improved. Individuals with deeper lines or acne scars may expect a much longer series of treatments, or likely benefit from surgical dermabrasion or laser resurfacing," says Cordeiro.

"With a series of microdermabrasion procedures, you can quickly achieve substantial improvement in the appearance of superficial lines, poor texture and uneven skin tone, while making your skin look and feel softer, smoother and more radiant. Acne scars and enlarged pores may become less noticeable," adds Allem.

**What happens:** Microdermabrasion is often compared to the feeling of a cat licking the skin – a rough, but gentle, texture.

The vacuum pressure and speed are adjusted depending on the sensitivity and tolerance of the skin. Sessions can last anywhere from five to 60 minutes. Minimal to no recovery time is required and most patients return to work or their normal activities immediately after a session.

Make-up and non-irritating creams can usually be applied after microdermabrasion.

**Note:** Since there is often an increase in minor skin sensitivity immediately after a treatment, irritating products such as glycolic acids, retinoid products or fragranced creams should be avoided for 24 to 48 hours after a microdermabrasion.

#### Pros:

As microdermabrasion causes only superficial skin removal, complications such as scarring and pigment changes are very rare. The treatment has the advantages of rapid recovery and low risk, and has little or no impact on patients' lifestyle. It is an ideal treatment for patients varying from the busy corporate woman looking for a "no-fuss" skin-rejuvenating treatment to the young adult male treating superficial signs of teenage acne.

- Fine lines and wrinkles become less apparent;
- Skin tone evens out;
- Texture becomes more refined;
- Oily or acne-prone skin is improved;
- Enlarged pores appear smaller;
- Superficial scars appear reduced;
- Skin appears healthier and more youthful;
- Superficial pigmentation is reduced in all skin types;
- Benefits include a fresher, brighter-looking skin and better penetration of active ingredients of skincare products;
- There is no significant pain or downtime; and
- All skin types can be safely treated.

#### Cons:

- The skin may appear red and sensitive directly after treatment, lasting up to 24 hours.
- Microdermabrasion is generally suitable for all skin types, but it is not advisable for patients with active acne or very sensitive skin.
- The treated area can feel tight and dry for about 48 hours after treatment (this is easily reduced by using the appropriate after-care creams); and
- The skin will be sensitive to the sun, so the use of a good facial sunblock is absolutely vital (as it is for anyone, every day).



**Suitability for different skin types:** Microdermabrasion safely treats all skin types without significant pain or downtime. It can improve acne, stretch marks, pigmentation, texture, pores and surface irregularities in only six to eight treatment sessions, two to four weeks apart. If the area of concern is severe, more treatments may be necessary.

People who have sunspots, sun-damaged skin, dry, aging skin, oily skin with enlarged pores and superficial acne scarring are good candidates.

While there are no specific age or sex restrictions, the typical microdermabrasion candidate can range from the age of 12 to 65. There is no age maximum. However, mature skin over the age of 70 needs proper assessment, as there may be an increased risk of bruising and skin abrasions. Children younger than 12 may also undergo treatment under the care of a dermatologist or plastic surgeon.

All areas of the body can be treated. It works very well on keratosis pilaris (KP), those pesky bumps on the upper arms and back of the legs.

**Costs:**  
R475 – R875  
(depending on the size  
of the area covered)



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**NEW BUZZWORD:  
HYDRADERMABRASION**

This new, latest version of microdermabrasion exfoliates, hydrates, oxygenates and rejuvenates skin with the aid of – you’ve guessed it – water.

It gives fast and fabulous results through deep, crystal-free exfoliation, which occurs by propelling a saline solution via pressurised oxygen to remove the top few millimetres of skin. Dead cells are removed while collagen and elastin are stimulated. Active serums are simultaneously delivered to the skin.

The treatment results in a plumper, youthful look with fantastic radiance. There is no pain and no downtime. It is perfect for dull skin, clogged pores, sun damage and age spots, wrinkles and fine lines. It offers an overall improvement in the look and the feel of the skin.

\* This treatment was recently demonstrated in South Africa. At the time of going to print, we have not yet ascertained whether there are local spas or medi-spas offering this treatment, but we will keep you posted.



**CASE STUDY:**

Ronelle Pienaar (33) is a graphic artist from Johannesburg. She struggles with severe pigmentation on her face. The causes for this condition are twofold: sun exposure and hormonal changes. "The pigmentation was caused by the Pill (I stopped using it six months ago for this reason) and I also never used sunscreen before the age of 30."

She embarked on the DermaQuest Power Pumpkin Resurfacer and Jessners peel programme at the rooms of aesthetic physician Dr Angie O'Brien in Houghton, Johannesburg.

She had two Power Pumpkin Resurfacer treatments three weeks apart (starting with 20% glycolic acid and increasing to 40%), and a final advanced DermaQuest Modified Jessners peel after three more weeks. After the advanced peel, her skin was shedding dramatically.

The results (after hiding behind dark glasses, a hat and a big scarf for a week after the final peel) are fantastic. The pigmentation marks are noticeably lighter, her skin tone is visibly more even, the texture of her skin is velvety, and pores are fine and almost invisible.

She is delighted with the results. "I am sold – from now on I will do this every year."

Tanya Smith from DermaQuest emphasises that homecare to prepare the skin, nourish it during the peel programme and maintenance with aftercare is crucial to the success of the procedure.

## TERMINOLOGY WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- **Exfoliation:** Targets the surface layers of the skin and works superficially.
- **Peel:** Deep penetration past superficial skin layers. A peel is a controlled burn. Peels are classified as superficial, medium and deep, which correlate with the depth of injury induced. A variety of chemical peels, including alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs), salicylic acid, trichloroacetic acid (TCA) and phenol, are used to treat acne, acne scars, photo damage and mottled hyperpigmentation.
- **Chemical peels – the difference between using a therapist and a doctor:** The therapist does a superficial peel; skin is brought down to a pH3 (normal skin pH is 4-5). The therapist works with hydroxy acid peels up to 30% and with a very low concentration of TCA. Doctors lower the skin pH to less than pH3; they work with hydroxy acid 50% and a high concentration of TCA.
- **Hydroxy acids (HA):** include glycolic acid (stimulates collagen production); lactic acid (treats pigmentation and hydrates skin); phytic acid (prevents pigmentation and acts as an antioxidant); mandelic acid (works like hydroquinone); and salicylic acid (gets rid of oil).
- **Glycolic acid (GA):** an AHA superficial peel that improves skin texture and reduces fine wrinkling and the number of actinic keratosis. It can also thin the stratum corneum and epidermis, and increase dermal collagen thickness. GA is found in many skin creams and has been shown to modestly improve photo damage.
- **Trichloroacetic acid(TCA):** used for a mild to medium (10-20%) or deep (25-35% and often together with anaesthesia) chemical peel, depending on the concentration. It involves downtime.
- **Phenol:** the strongest of the chemical solutions. A deep chemical peel, it is administered only by doctors, undertaken in hospitals by plastic surgeons. It has a degree of cardiac risk, and requires significant downtime and lifelong sun protection.
- **Resurfacing techniques:**  
**Microdermabrasion:** exfoliates and ablates the superficial epidermis.  
**Microcoblation:** uses low-frequency radiofrequency energy delivered via a recessed electrode bathed in saline solution on the skin. It creates superficial epidermal injury and triggers a healing response. ■



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