

What Is A Chemical Peel, and Is It for Me?

Chemical peels (sometimes called ‘resurfacing treatments’) are a type of esthetic skin treatment that involves applying a chemical solution to the skin which removes the top layer of dead skin, leaving new skin underneath that looks noticeably smoother and more youthful.

They are a popular anti-aging and rejuvenating treatment; peels and resurfacing treatments encourage your natural skin cells to renew, stimulating the skin’s natural collagen production and helping treat skin concerns like fine lines and wrinkles. Resurfacing peels are more likely to be milder ‘superficial’ peels.

There are three main types of chemical peel used by estheticians in the US.

Superficial Peel:

This is a type of peel which involves using mild acid – usually a type of alpha-hydroxy acid - which is designed to only penetrate the outer layer of skin. This works to gently exfoliate the skin, which improves its appearance, helping to reduce the signs of mild skin discoloration, hyper-pigmentation and rough skin. It’s also a popular treatment for people who are looking for an effective way to refresh the facial complexion and brighten up the appearance of the skin on the face,

neck, chest and even the hands. A superficial peel may need to be repeated monthly to keep up the results.

Medium Peel:

This is a stronger version of the chemical peel, usually involving applying a type of glycolic acid to the skin, which penetrates both the outer and middle layers of skin and helps to remove any damaged skin cells. A medium peel suits people looking for a stronger treatment, who might want to improve the appearance of any age spots, fine lines and wrinkles, and treat moderate skin discoloration. A medium peel can be repeated every 6 - 12 months.

Deep Peel:

While superficial and medium strength chemical peels are effective, they will need to be repeated as the effects are not permanent. A deep peel, while being a riskier option, is longer lasting and doesn't need to be repeated. A stronger type of acid, usually a phenol, is applied to your skin and left on for around 30 minutes to deeply penetrate through to the middle layer of skin. It's very effective for treating lines, age spots, and shallow scars.

You might need a local anaesthetic for a deep peel, as it can be uncomfortable, and your heart and blood pressure will need to be monitored during the procedure, too. The procedure can also leave you with peeling, redness and discomfort for some time afterwards

so there will be downtime involved. There will be a dramatic improvement in your skin appearance afterwards, though, which should be permanent.

What Type of Chemical Peel Is for Me?

The best advice is to speak to a professional; ask your esthetician or skin therapist about which type of peel is best to address your specific skin concerns. In general, deep peels are not usually suitable for darker skin as they can have an unwanted lightening effect.

People who struggle with difficult-to-treat skin conditions, or need to repair the effects of sun damage, acne or scarring may benefit from a deeper chemical peel to improve the look and texture of their complexion. Most people will benefit from a light, exfoliating or resurfacing peel.

Who Shouldn't Have A Chemical Peel?

If you are pregnant, it's usually not advisable to have a peel. Other people who should avoid peels are those who have very sensitive skin, and people on some medications (your esthetician will advise).

You will also have to avoid sun exposure before your treatment, along with any facial waxing or exfoliating treatments. Always insist on a patch test at least 24 hours before your peel to make sure that you don't have an allergic reaction to the chemicals used in the peel.