

Patient Sheet on Trichloroacetic Acid (TCA) Peel

The Trichloroacetic Acid Peel treatment is a safe chemical peel. This application will lead to the removal of thin surface layers of aged and damaged skin. Layers of dead skin exfoliate and are replaced by healthier ones allowing the skin's own clarity and tightness to resurface.

Who should get the TCA peel? - The TCA peel is for anyone who wants to reverse the appearance of aging skin. Anyone with poor pigmentation problems, wrinkles, sun damage, blemish prone skin or generally poor skin quality is a candidate for this procedure.

How should I prepare for the peel? Using a retinoid and hydroquinone cream is beneficial before the peel. If you use a retinoid, you must stop using 2-3 days prior to the procedure. Also let Dr. Holy know if you have any presence of irritation, eczema, inflammation or dermatitis. If you have a history of cold sores, please let us know so we can call in a prescription for you to your pharmacy so you can pre-treat before your peel.

Swelling - Your swelling will probably peak on the second or third day then diminish. For swelling you can try to sleep on your back with your head elevated on a couple of pillows. Cold moist cloths or periodic ice application for a few days is soothing and helpful for swelling.

Peeling Skin - Your skin will appear red and swollen for about two days. Usually on the third day a light brown layer of skin forms. This will gradually slough off over the next few days to reveal new pink smooth skin. Do not pick or pull this skin, you may trim it back as necessary. Your skin should be completely healed in 7-10 days. Though side effects can range from stinging, mild swelling, redness, scabbing or peeling, all of which are temporary, lasting only a few days at most. Rare complications include hyper and hypo pigmentation, prolonged erythema, infection, scarring, and textural change (skin feels grainy or looks porous).

Redness - How long the new skin stays red is quite variable. It can last just a week or several weeks. Make-up is fine to help conceal it once the skin is fully healed and no longer crusting.

Topical Care - Aquaphor ointment or Elta MD melting moisturizer should be applied 2-10 times per day. You should wash the old layer of ointment off with mild soap using gentle circular motions with your fingertips (no wash cloth) prior to applying the next layer. It is very important to keep the skin glistening with as little crust as possible. Sometimes very tiny superficial pimples can form on the skin, and these will usually resolve in a week or two. Once the skin is healed, ointment is no longer necessary and your usual moisturizer is preferred. It is very important to avoid sun exposure during the healing process and you should continue to protect your skin. If you have a previous history of herpes simplex (cold sores), the procedure might aggravate this and cause them to reoccur. You should always wear sunblock whether inside or outside. If you are going to be in direct sunlight, you can protect your face with a wide-brimmed hat also.

How Often? - The TCA peel may be done as often as every 3-6 months the first year (deep acne scars) then once yearly to allow you the best skin texture and tone.

SUNBLOCK... SUNBLOCK... SUNBLOCK... Please use a good sunblock that has zinc oxide!!!! We will help you select one if you are uncertain as to what to use. This is a critical component of maintenance and key to preventing future issues. It is very important that you use sunscreen to prevent sun damage to the skin. Sunscreen should offer broadband protection (UVA and UVB) and have a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or more. Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going outside, and again, immediately after. Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours. If direct sun exposure is necessary, wear a hat and dark clothing that covers the treated area. Your practice of diligent sunscreen use may lower the risk of injury-induced hyperpigmentation (darker color).

Please give our office a call if you have any questions at 602.867.7546