



ANTI-OXIDANT PEELS

BY JENNIFER BARNES



Glycolic peels are performed regularly
in plastic surgery and
dermatology offices...

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AND HAVE RAPIDLY BECOME an integral part of the beauty routines of many patients. Adding anti-oxidants to the peel solution is a great way to reduce any irritating side effects and produce more dramatic long-term results.

John Kulesza, director of research and development at Young Pharmaceuticals, has been assisting physicians in creating specialized peel preparations for the last 15 years. He is currently focused on improving peels

with such anti-oxidant agents as vitamin C and green tea. "When a peel is performed, the skin's structure is changed, making it easier to deliver certain types of treatments to lower layers," he says. "We can exploit the fact that the skin is easier to penetrate during a glycolic peel."

As we age, the process of cellular turnover slows down, resulting in a build up of dead cells on the surface of the skin. "If you compare young skin with

more mature skin, the mature person's complexion doesn't shine as much because they have a build up of dead cells that are not sloughing off the way they should," explains Mr. Kulesza. "Glycolic peels reduce the cohesiveness of those dead skin cells. It 'unsticks' them, so to speak."

Thanks to their ability to both destroy free radicals and boost collagen production, anti-oxidants are the current craze in beauty. Debra Jaliman, M.D. is a New York-based dermatologist who has been using anti-oxidants in peels for the last five years. "Anti-oxidants are truly beneficial to the skin; they may stimulate more collagen production," she says. "If you are peeling the skin with glycolic acid, you can increase the penetration of whatever you put into that peel, such as vitamin C and vitamin E."

There is another benefit to adding anti-oxidants to the peel process. Side effects of exfoliation can often include redness, dryness and inflammation. "Glycolic peels can irritate the skin, especially if you're dealing with fair types like blue-eyed blondes and green-eyed redheads," says Dr. Jaliman. "Vitamin C has a soothing effect and when you add it or another anti-oxidant to the peel it makes a tremendous difference. I find that patients who normally couldn't tolerate peels now can."

"Many people who undergo anti-oxidant peels wonder at first if they are actually working, since they don't see this redness," says Mr. Kulesza. "The goal of a peel isn't to cause redness but to exfoliate and improve cellular turnover."

Anti-oxidants are stable in their powder form but as soon as they are added to a water-based solution the "stability clock" starts ticking and they very quickly become less effective. Consequently, anti-oxidant solutions must be created immediately preceding the procedure.

"We take the glycolic acid in either a liquid or gel form and add a measurement of anti-oxidant powder," explains Dr. Jaliman. "We mix the peel solution and prep the skin by making sure it has no oil on it. Depending on whether it is in gel or liquid form, we apply the peel solution using a brush or cotton pads, ensuring that the solution is distributed evenly across the face. We watch the skin very closely; the peel

can be left on for up to two minutes before being washed off."

"You have the full potency of the anti-oxidant when they are applied immediately after entering the peel solution," notes Mr. Kulesza.

Although anti-oxidant additives help to prevent the dryness and tightness associated with glycolic peels, they cannot stop all moisture loss. "When the barrier that holds water inside the skin is removed, the risk of dryness increases. It's the water content of our skin that determines its suppleness," says Mr. Kulesza. "The skin does restore its own barrier in a matter of days but in the meantime, we recommend using an emollient to help retain as much water as possible."

After a peel, the skin will react better to at-home treatments and maintenance for a couple of weeks. Most doctors advise leaving the skin alone and letting it recover for a few days before following through with a good vitamin C serum or cream as part of a regular beauty routine. "I give patients maintenance products to take home," adds Dr. Jaliman.

While there are very few risks associated with this type of treatment, anyone with rosacea and atopic dermatitis may want to avoid chemical peels altogether. "People with very sensitive skin can have peels but lower concentrations of acids are used," says Mr. Kulesza. "The long-term effect of an anti-oxidant peel and the application of topical anti-oxidants, in general, is a reduction in fine lines and wrinkles."



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