



Seattle Eye M.D.s

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Chemical Peel

A chemical peel or facial peel is a nonsurgical technique used to smooth some of the fine facial wrinkles associated with aging. Areas of sun-damaged skin and certain skin discolorations also respond to the procedure.

An acid solution is applied to the face, causing the top layer of skin to peel, revealing new, fresh layers of skin. Chemical peels affect superficial, medium, or deep layers of skin depending on the strength of the acid, the duration of contact, and skin type. Deeper peels increase the risk of scarring.

Creams are often prescribed to prepare the skin several weeks before the procedure. The acid can produce a burning and tightening sensation, but most people do not require anesthesia.

With superficial peels, skin will appear pink or red following the procedure. Mild facial swelling may develop, especially around the eyes and on the chin. Some areas of skin may become crusty or scaly.

Medium depth peels cause more intense swelling. The skin is initially white, becoming increasingly red for the first 24 to 48 hours. The skin then peels as if severely sunburned. Peeling lasts from four to eight days. Skin may appear pink for several weeks.

While bandages are not necessary, a thin layer of prescribed ointment keeps the skin clean and moist after a chemical peel. Patients who are taking Accutane can have problems with scarring following peels.