

Treatment of Aging and Sun-Damaged Skin

The ravages of time and the sun

It is not possible to turn back the hands of time, but the effects can be slowed down. And there is help for those who have found that bronze is not beautiful. The natural aging process results in wrinkles and may often cause other skin problems. For example, a once-attractive mole may change into an unattractive protrusion in later life, or a once-unnoticeable scar becomes magnified when wrinkles form around it. Sun damage compounds the aging process. Sun exposure penetrates not only the outer layer of skin, but also those layers underneath which fortify the skin and lend it resilience. Anti-aging creams can treat only damage to the skin's uppermost layers.

Corrective Procedures

- Chemical peels are now generally accepted as the most effective treatment for sun-damaged skin. The dermatologic surgeon applies chemical agents to the skin in a controllable manner. As healing occurs, the quality of the new skin is noticeably smoother. This technique has been refined and vastly improved over the years. The effects of the procedure can last up to 20 years.
- • The facelift is a well-known procedure which removes sagging and redundant skin, particularly from the lower third of the face and under the chin. Like the chemical peel, this technique has been refined over the years. A number of dermatologic surgeons now perform both facelifts and eyelid tucks as in-office procedures under local anesthesia. The facelift may last from five to seven years.
- • Dermabrasion is a technique in which a special instrument removes or abrades the upper layers of the skin and smoothes out irregularities in the skin surface. Although usually performed to correct scarring, some physicians prefer the technique to chemical peels for wrinkling. Dermabrasion of wrinkles may last up to 20 years.
- • Soft tissue augmentation involves adding a substance to the layers under the skin. It is used to correct wrinkles, depressions and acne scarring. This relatively new form of treatment is finding increased acceptance and widespread use. There are several alternatives:
 - Collagen treatments*: Bovine collagen may be injected to soften wrinkles.
 - Zyderm collagen* is used for superficial to medium-depth wrinkling. Zyplast collagen is used to treat deeper scars, furrows, creases, and wrinkles. The effects may last six to twelve months.
 - Fibrel*: Fibrel is a new form of soft tissue augmentation which has been tested in correcting scars. It is expected to be useful in treating aging skin. Fibrel is a gelatin matrix implant which is activated by the patient's own blood products. A series of treatments is normally necessary.
 - Micro lipoinjection*: In this new, experimental procedure, minute increments of fat are extracted from one part of a patient's body (the thigh, for example) and injected into the area of depression in another area of the skin. Evidence is being gathered to see how long the benefits last.