

(Parkland Life for August 2010)

Repairing Damage from Summer Sun

By David J. Levens, MD, PA, FACS

Despite warnings about skin damage from sun exposure, a deep summer tan is just too tempting for some to resist. For others, overexposure is not intentional but the result of applying too little protection during outdoor activities. Either way, now is the time to take corrective action to repair summertime damage in advance of fall and winter holidays.

Medically-supervised corrective skin care has come a long way in the past five years, with new products and treatments that are very successful in reducing hyper-pigmentation and rejuvenation of dry, "leathery" skin resulting from sun exposure.

Retaining some "suntan glow" during skin repair is a high priority for many patients and today's corrective techniques can help achieve that as well.

Depending on the patient's age and the severity of damage, a corrective regimen typically involves a series of treatments to aggressively address discoloration and improve texture. Newer microdermabrasion methods followed by a light chemical peel can tighten, brighten, soften and smooth the skin. For more severe damage a Vi Peel may be advised-- a painless phenol peel that takes only 20 minutes, with no downtime. It does an excellent job on age spots and fine wrinkles as well as general sun damage. It even stimulates collagen production to make skin look firmer.

Treatments alone, however, seldom achieve desired results or make the skin healthier and more resistant to future damage. An at-home skin care program, tailored to the patient's lifestyle and budget, is necessary to achieve and sustain improvements. New products, such as PCA SKIN can permeate the skin's outer layer to treat cells beneath. The niacin-powered NIA 24 line, have been developed specifically to repair sun damage in the tropics. A licensed aesthetician can recommend the best approach.

How many treatments are needed to repair sun damage? Every case differs, but maximum improvement seldom occurs from a single treatment...just as one trip to the gym doesn't change a person's physique. Peels can remove the outer layer of facial skin but if the cells beneath haven't been "retrained" through repeated treatments, the skin will grow back with many of its original problems.

Facial skin which has been properly cared for over a long period is also more flexible and responsive to both invasive and non-invasive cosmetic surgery. Most surgeons

require pre-op corrective skin care treatments to prepare the skin for such procedures as facelift, eyelid/brow surgery, laser skin resurfacing and even wrinkle fillers.

So if you're thinking about a "nip and tuck" to start 2011 with a bang, now's the time to be thinking about some pro-active skin care. #

David J. Levens, MD, PA, FACS is a Columbia University Medical School graduate, a Board-Certified Plastic surgeon, and former Chief of Surgery, Coral Springs Medical Center. Dr. Levens was named a Top Doc in Castle Connolly's national ratings for 2010. He is celebrating 21 years of practice in Coral Springs. 954-752-1020.
www.DrLevens.com.