

Skin Rejuvenation for Summer: Healthy Alternatives to the Not-So-Perfect Tan

Contributed by Dr. Peter Karlsberg

Summer

Summer somehow makes us feel younger, and we all want to look as young as we feel. As summer approaches, too many of us are already rushing outside to work on the perfect tan, because a tan somehow makes us feel more youthful and more attractive to others. But we all know about the dangers of tanning: exposure to the sun's harmful rays not only promotes skin cancer, but also causes premature aging of the skin. In fact, recent data have shown that even moderate sun exposure, without burning, triggers the activation of enzymes that break down the skin's collagen and elastin, resulting in thin, fragile skin, wrinkling, easy bruising, and that leathery hide look we all fear. In addition, many people are noticing that, with each passing year, their skin tans less evenly, instead taking on an unappealing blotchy, sallow or muddy tone.

But there are healthier alternatives to the imperfect tan, the simplest of which is to use a sunless tanning cream or lotion. These products now contain dihydroxyacetone, which temporarily stains the outer layers of skin a golden brown. To achieve the best results, use a gentle exfoliant before application and wait at least one hour between applications until the desired color is reached. A touch-up coat every 3 to 5 days is usually all that is necessary. But be careful: sunless tanning preparations do not protect the skin from the sun. You must still use a sunscreen and common sense.

There are many other dermatologic secrets to healthier, more youthful appearing skin which are ideally suited for the summer months, when we want to look our best without having to sacrifice valuable time to recover from big procedures. These quick fixes for summer include Botox treatment, light chemical peels, collagen replacement therapy, the new SoftForm facial implant, laser removal of red spots and stitch-free removal of cosmetically bothersome moles and other minor growths.

Botox

Frown lines between the eyebrows, surprise lines across the forehead, and smile lines outside the eyes (crow's feet) can be quickly and easily softened by an FDA approved substance called Botox. These lines are due to the repetitive action of strong underlying muscles which some people tend to over use in their everyday facial expressions, conveying a worried, tense or aged appearance. When injected in small quantities beneath the skin, Botox reduces or eliminates such furrows by temporarily paralyzing the muscles which created them. Botox is safe, effective and minimally invasive. It is administered in the doctor's office with little discomfort, and there is virtually no down time for recovery. The effect lasts about three to six months, after which almost all of my patients return for a repeat treatment, a reflection of their great satisfaction with this technique. In addition, Botox treatment prolongs and improves the beneficial effects of wrinkle treatment with lasers by keeping the wrinkles at rest as the new, tighter collagen is formed in the skin.

Light Chemical Peels

Superficial peels are an effective means of improving skin tone, color and texture, especially when performed in a series and in conjunction with an effective, individualized home skin care regimen. These peels can be performed in the dermatologist's office without the need for time off to recover. Light peels can also reduce problems with blocked pores and increase the water-retaining properties of the skin, improving skin resilience. Light peeling agents include glycolic acid, so-called Jessner's solution, and the new beta-hydroxy solutions. Each agent has its own unique properties and should be selected according to individual patient needs.

Collagen and SoftForm

Many wrinkles are due to the loss or distortion of underlying collagen, elastic tissue or fat over time. As we age, the lips begin to lose fullness, the folds between the base of the nostrils and corners of the mouth deepen, and so-called marionette lines extend down from the corners of the mouth toward the chin. Both collagen replacement therapy and the new SoftForm facial implant offer safe and effective means of correcting these problems, without requiring excessive recovery times.

Collagen has a very long record of safety and high patient satisfaction rates. Although collagen replacement therapy is temporary, it is now much more affordable than before, so that long-term correction is easily achievable for most patients. The new SoftForm implant is a biocompatible, non-allergenic, permanent solution to these same problems. This implant is designed to feel more natural and does not exhibit the problems of hardness, clumping, or migration associated with the older Gore-Tex implants. SoftForm can be placed under local anesthesia, right in the dermatologist's office, through very small incisions. Recovery from swelling is generally rapid.

Lasers for Red Spots

Another quick fix for summer: Many individuals are annoyed by red spots or so-called broken capillaries (telangiectases) on the face or body. These are particularly common around the base of the nose and cheeks and are difficult to hide with foundation or cover-ups. A new laser now exists which can clear these red spots quickly and easily, with little discomfort and virtually no down time. Typically, a patient may go back to work the same day with nothing more than a blush on the skin which resolves in just one to two days.

Removing Moles and Minor Growths

Many people are self-conscious about non-cancerous but unattractive growths on their faces or bodies. They are often dissuaded from having them removed because they anticipate that an expensive, painful or extensive procedure would be required. In experienced hands, this is rarely the case. Most of these growths can be removed quickly and easily in the dermatologist's

office, without sutures or great expense, and with an excellent cosmetic result. Healing takes only 7 to 12 days.

Minimally invasive, low risk and fast recovery procedures are the hallmarks of cosmetic dermatology today. With recent medical and technologic advances, the well-trained dermatologist has an array of effective tools at his or her disposal to address and correct skin problems in a selective fashion. Separate techniques can be combined to achieve optimal results specifically tailored to the individual's problems. Not everyone needs a facelift or full face laser resurfacing procedure to look and feel their best.

Remember, the best treatment for skin cancer and photoaging is prevention. Use your sunscreen diligently, wear protective clothing, use common sense, and have a great summer!