



Facing up to a peel

Kate Coghlan

BEING a beauty writer requires a willingness to act as a guinea pig. Sometimes that's a pleasure, and I can regale my envious friends with stories of pedicures and facials, but when I told my colleagues I was headed to Bondi Junction to test a chemical peel, most were concerned and told me horror stories about friends who had experienced permanent scarring as a result of a peel.

"Chemical peel" is a very broad term which describes a range of facials where various types of acids are applied to the face to remove the upper layers of damaged and wrinkled skin. Stronger peels can help people with acne scarring, severe skin damage from the sun or deep wrinkles. More gentle peels can help with fine lines, the first signs of sun damage or mild pigmentation problems.

Dr Warwick Nettle, a plastic surgeon, recommended peels as a first step in the anti-ageing process.

"The idea is to strip and nourish. For fresh-looking skin the best prod-

ucts are vitamin A and vitamin C products. Glycolic peels and microdermabrasion can help to remove the outer layers of skin to reveal a younger, fresher skin," he said.

He also warned that sunscreen must be worn after the treatments.

"Also, pregnant or breastfeeding women should avoid Retin-A products," he said.

Peels should only be performed by a professional – the abundance of products available on the internet, things like high-concentration lactic acid, are dangerous products if they are not applied properly, if they are left on too long or are applied too frequently. Complications may include scarring, abnormal pigmentation or cold sores and fever blisters, all of which can be avoided if you are in the hands of someone who knows what they are doing.

Maureen Cole, a paramedical aesthetician, had me change into a robe then hop onto a treatment bed under warm blankets. She began by removing my make-up, then applied a combination of acids to strip the



top layer of dead cells on my face. This was combined with an enzyme-rich solution which infused my skin with moisture while the acids peeled. While it did its thing, Ms Cole massaged my shoulders, arms and hands.

After about 10 minutes, Ms Cole removed the solution and used a bright light to examine the skin. She did some extractions, which involved squeezing any congested pores to rid oil plugs or blackheads). Appalled at the state of my eyebrows, she waxed



and shaped them. Finally, Ms Cole applied another combination of peeling acids to my skin. The whole time, a gentle stream of warm steam was washing over my face, helping to open my pores and aiding in the absorption of the facial. It didn't sting as I had expected it to: there was a mild prickling sensation which lasted into the evening but it was gone by the time I went to bed. I was told to leave my face alone once I got home, and to wash it only with water the next day, then smother it with plenty of moisturiser and sun block. On day three there was some light peeling, just like slight sunburn. However, my skin wasn't at all red or sore, and looked great without make-up for the two days I left it to breathe.

My face is now baby smooth, and it is something I would do again – especially in the week before a special occasion. Make sure you do your research before choosing a clinic, and ask around among your friends for any recommendations.

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TOP THREE AT HOME POST PEEL CARE

1. La Mer The Concentrate \$845 from David Jones

Rich in La Mer's patented Miracle Broth, The Concentrate is a serum which is especially suited to post-surgery or post-peel skin. It aids in the skin's natural healing process - and it smells and feels divine. A little goes a long way.

2. QV Wash \$10.95 from pharmacies

This is a gentle, non-soap foaming cleanser which is ideal for sensitised skin. Use it on your face and your body – it's one of the cheapest cleansers on the market, and in our humble opinion, one of the very best.

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3. Dermalogica Daylight Defense System Super Sensitive Faceblock SPF 30 \$59 ph 1800 659 1118

We love all the Dermalogica sunscreens, but this one is particularly recommended for sensitive skin, so it's great for post-peel protection. Remember, you must cover up with a hat and sunnies too if you're going to be sitting in the sun soon after a peel.