

Caring for your skin after a Chemical Peel

Dr Saqib Bashir

Introduction

A chemical peel is a method used by specialist dermatologists to remove the outer layers of skin, to allow new skin to grow through. This treatment can be used to remove blemishes and wrinkles, and to make the skin look younger and feel smoother.

What does it feel like?

When the peel is applied, a hot, burning sensation can be felt, that cools quickly with specialist air cooling and after treatment creams. The condition of the skin depends on the intensity of the peel you have had. A superficial peel will recover more quickly than a medium depth or deep peel.

What can I expect after the peel ?

Immediately after the peel, the skin will look white where the acid has been applied – this is called frosting. The area of frosting will also become red, with the redness extending beyond the treated area. In the next few hours, the whiteness will subside, and the skin simply looks red. Usually, by the evening of the peel, a brownish tinge to the skin can develop.

Several hours after the peel, the treated area will become dry and wrinkled. It's essential that you moisturize your skin as directed by your dermatologist. The simplest thing to use, if you in any doubt, is plain Vaseline.

Three to four days after your peel, the skin will begin to shed. In superficial peels, this can be very mild or barely noticeable. As the peels become deeper, such as medium depth peels, large scales of skin can shed off.

Following this, new skin can be seen beneath the scales, which will come through and form your new skin surface. Try your best not to pick off any scales, but let them come off through gentle moisturizing.

How do I wash my skin?

Your dermatologist will recommend an antibacterial wash for you, such as Dermol 500 or Dermol Cream. You should not use any soap, any scrubs or any toner on your skin. Simply apply the cream prescribed and wash it off, as if it was a regular cleanser. Pat the skin gently dry with a clean towel. Once the skin is dry, you may apply another fine layer of the Dermol cream or lotion as a moisturizer. Repeat this morning and night.

How do I moisturize my skin?

After a peel, your skin needs a lot of moisture. It is essential that you care well for your skin to help it heal well. Ideally, moisturize every hour with Dermol cream. Any areas of thick scaling can be moisturized with plain Vaseline petroleum jelly, or 50:50 white soft paraffin. At night, before bed, moisturise the whole treated area with Vaseline or 50:50 white soft paraffin.

Always wash your hands before applying the cream to the peeled area.

Once the new skin starts to come through, you should continue to avoid soap based products and harsh cleansers. At that stage, you can moisturize with a post peel cream such as Ciccaplast by La Roche Posay.

Preventing Complications

Protecting your skin from the sun is important after peel. Use a hat, stay in the shade and apply a high factor (SPF 30+) sunscreen if you are going anywhere sunny.

If you have concerns that you may have an infection, with painful skin, sores on the skin or pus or yellow crusts on the skin, you may need antibiotic or antiviral medication.

If you need advice, it's advisable to contact your dermatologist via Monica on 020 3 299 4238 or the nurses at the BMI Sloane on 002 8466 4000 or enquiries@skinetix.co.uk if you have any concerns. Out of hours, or in an emergency, NHS Direct or your GP/A&E service can advise you appropriately.