



Microdermabrasion: What is it?

Microdermabrasion, what is it? Why do I hear about it all the time? And does it work?

Microdermabrasion, a technology of European origin, is designed to rejuvenate and refresh your skin without the extended recovery periods common to laser and deep chemical peel resurfacing.

How does microdermabrasion work?

Microdermabrasion is a method of mechanically exfoliating the upper layers of non-viable skin cells. Abrasive particles such as aluminum oxide crystal, sodium bicarb salts or silicone derived particles are forcibly directed out through a hand piece and at the skin. As the hand piece is gently advanced the abrasive particles are guided out and suctioned back into the machine. This combination of abrasion and suction removes upper layers of dead skin and seems to stimulate lower layers of healthy skin to reproduce.



What is the history of microdermabrasion?

Microdermabrasion originated in Italy in the mid 1980's. It gained an exceptional amount of positive feedback before being marketed in the US. Originally the manufacturers attempted to get the machine approved as a medical device which would require FDA approval. However, they quickly reevaluated this path and designed it and marketed it as a cosmetic device, therefore avoiding intense scrutiny and making it available to non-physicians.

Is Microdermabrasion for me?

Each person is an individual with different needs and desires. However, microdermabrasion is reported to:

- Soften fine wrinkles,
- Lessen superficial skin discoloration,
- Smooth the skin's surface and
- Provide the skin with a healthy glow.

When combined with a superficial chemical peel the depth of treatment can be extended providing for a more complete treatment. It will not remove deep wrinkles, deep pigmented skin changes or acne scars. These conditions require a much deeper resurfacing technique such as a deep chemical peel or laser. If you are not sure which resurfacing technique is for you, I recommend a consultation with a physician who performs all the various techniques in order to get the most objective advice.



Who performs Microdermabrasion?

This has been somewhat of a hot potato issue. Microdermabrasion is intended to remain superficial and to not violate the dermis or healthy living skin cells. As long as it stays at this superficial level, a licensed aesthetician in the state of Illinois may legally perform the procedure. (Cosmetic Surgery Times; August 2000;Vol.3;No.7:p18-19). Physicians also perform microdermabrasion and may even take it to a deeper level in attempt to generate a better result. Whomever you choose to perform your treatment it is important to be certain of their experience level.

What can I expect during the treatment?

Most likely you will be treated in a relaxed office or spa setting. You may feel a slight pulling sensation as the hand piece is advanced over the desired area. The treatment is not considered painful and is usually completed in under a half-hour.

What can I expect following the treatment?

One of the greatest benefits to microdermabrasion is that there is little to no downtime. Following treatment you will feel relaxed, your face should feel refreshed and you can expect a healthy glow to your skin. You may be slightly pink but most people feel comfortable immediately returning to work. Makeup generally can be reapplied shortly following the procedure.

How often do I need to be treated?

A protocol should be worked out that is unique to your skin necessities and your schedule. Optimal results have been reported when a series of treatments are repeated every two weeks for a two to three month period. However, I am aware of many patients who are pleasantly satisfied with monthly treatments.

Is it safe?

Microdermabrasion should be considered very safe but like any mechanical device if it is used by an inexperienced careless individual harm can result.

Is it expensive?

Prices for treatments vary. If performed in a doctor's office or by a physician the price may be higher. Also some centers will combine your treatment with expensive topical products so be sure to ask exactly what is included in your treatment. Generally a facial treatment will range in price from \$125-\$250 dollars.

What is the future?

As health conscious individuals continue to demand improved facial results with little to no downtime, microdermabrasion will continue to evolve. Scientific studies are just becoming available validating years of anecdotal claims. Another question is will there be or what will be the next better alternative to Microdermabrasion? A new machine (Skin Master tm) utilizing ultrasonic waves to exfoliate hydrate and rejuvenate the skin has been developed and is being marketed. The skin master theoretically offers many advantages over microdermabrasion and may be the next step but only time will tell.

Currently in Chicago, there is an ongoing three-month clinical trial determining the effectiveness of microdermabrasion treatments on improving sun induced pigmented skin changes. Those interested in enrolling will receive microdermabrasion treatments at no cost but will be asked to commit one hour per month for three months. To learn more about the inclusion requirements call 773-472-7559.

Bottom line

Are you the right person for microdermabrasion? If you are on the go and want the maximum improvement in your skin's appearance without the extended recovery period associated with other traditional resurfacing methods, microdermabrasion may be the safe and effective answer for you.



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