

# Ask the Plastic Surgeons

## What is the difference between laser skin resurfacing, microdermabrasion and medical grade peels

*By Dr. Wendell Smoot and Dr. John Smoot*

**Q. I'm contemplating a non-surgical procedure to rejuvenate the appearance of my facial skin. What is the difference between laser skin resurfacing, microdermabrasion and medical grade peels and what kind of results can I expect?**

**A.** The winter months are an excellent time to consider facial resurfacing procedures as the sun is less intense and it's easier to conceal your skin from harmful post-procedure UVA rays. All skin treatments work in a similar way: removal of a layer of skin so that the new skin can regenerate and fill in the wrinkles and crevices. Chemical peel uses a chemical solution to improve and smooth the texture of the facial skin by removing its damaged outer layers. Microdermabrasion is a skin-freshening technique that helps repair facial skin that has been over-exposed to the sun and the effects of aging. The physician uses a device like a fine sandblaster to spray tiny crystals across the face, mixing gentle abrasion with suction to remove the dead, outer layer of skin. Both these procedures offer the anti-aging benefits of glowing skin, reduced wrinkles, decreased areas of skin discoloration, and minimized scarring. Chemical peels require a longer recovery time, while Microdermabrasion has no recovery time, but may take multiple treatments to have the desired effect. Laser skin resurfacing uses laser light and effectively treats deeper layers than does microdermabrasion or chemical peels.

Generally the laser skin resurfacing treatment is delivered by a physician in the office, an outpatient surgery center, or in a hospital under local anesthesia, while you are sedated but awake; however, general anesthesia may be used for treatment of deeper layers of the skin. Treatment time ranges from a few minutes to an hour and a half, depending on the amount of resurfacing required. The doctor moves the laser precisely over the area of skin requiring treatment. Depending on the depth of the wrinkle, scar, or discoloration, the laser may be moved over the area repeatedly. Once the lower layer of skin is exposed,

healing can begin to rebuild new skin that looks younger and free of imperfections. There are different lasers such as the CO2, Fraxel and IPL; your surgeon will let you know which one is best suited for you. The most aggressive laser is the CO2, which also requires the longest recovery time. The other types of lasers have less dramatic results with less downtime and may require more than one treatment. End results provide improvement of acne scars, brown age spots, melasma (patchy or concentrated dark or tan areas), decrease in fine lines, and reduced pores.



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