

SAVING FACE

We have Coco Chanel to thank for turning the simple suntan into a quintessential fashion accessory in the 1920s. By the '70s, we were dousing ourselves in baby oil and sautéing our flesh; then we progressed to scheduling standing appointments at the ubiquitous tanning salons of the '80s. Only after we'd established ourselves as hopeless sun junkies did we learn that our cherished UVA and UVB rays were doing us more harm than good.

Twenty years later my face personified the ironic consequences of chasing a misguided beauty ideal. A tired woman with sallow, dull

skin looked out at me from my mirror each morning. I'd slather her face with copious amounts of foundation in an attempt to hide the fine lines, sunspots and freckles, but it sank into the wrinkles, emphasizing them more than if I'd applied nothing at all. I was trapped behind the face of a woman who looked much older than I felt.

At 47, I wasn't ready for plastic surgery but I needed something that would reveal what was behind the damage, something aggressive but not invasive. Then I heard about the North Star Laser Peel.

Available only at the Skin Rejuvenation Clinic, P.A., a non-surgical cosmetic clinic in Edina, the North Star Laser Peel is a combination of three highly effective laser treatments: Broadband Light, a MicroLaser Peel and the ProFractional laser. Each treatment is available on its own, but when applied in succession during a single appointment, they pack a one-two-three punch against the effects of aging, delivering dramatic results with minimal down time.

I scheduled a consultation with Dr. Elizabeth Brauer Hagberg, who co-owns the Skin Rejuvenation Clinic with her husband, Dr. Mark Hagberg,

SKIN REJUVENATION CLINIC

(www.skinrejuvenationclinic.net)

- North Star Laser Peel \$1800 (a savings of \$270)
- Broadband Light \$375

- MicroLaser Peel \$695
- ProFractional \$1000

Both board-certified physicians, the couple directs the clinic's skin care programs and administers all facial laser and injectable treatments. During our conversation, Dr. Beth explained what to expect before, during and after each procedure. After she addressed my concerns and questions I was ready to proceed and scheduled an appointment for the following day. Though the North Star Laser Peel takes about an hour and a half, I was instructed to arrive an hour early; prior to the treatment a topical anesthetic is applied to numb the skin and requires 45 minutes to take effect.

The first treatment, Broadband Light, lifts irregular pigmentation like freckles, age spots, rosacea and facial spider veins with no down time. It felt like a small rubber band snapping against the skin and took about 15 minutes.

The MicroLaser Peel removes the outermost layers of skin to diminish wrinkles, acne scars, sun and age spots, and to improve skin texture and tightness. Recovery takes 3-4 days, with sunburn-like symptoms and sloughing on the second or third day. The loudest of the procedures, it sounded like a tiny jackhammer shooting rapid pulses of heat and light into the skin. The procedure lasted about 20 minutes.

The ProFractional laser creates tiny laser columns that penetrate deep into the skin to treat wrinkles and acne scars while stimulating new collagen development and improving skin texture. There is little to no recovery time. The longest of the treatments, it took about 45 minutes.

After three hours at the clinic I was sent home with lotions, creams, emollients and instructions for recovery. The anesthesia wore off and the redness intensified, but the pain felt no greater than a moderate sunburn,

nothing a dose of ibuprofen and a glass of wine couldn't relieve. I applied a soothing ointment to moisturize and protect my face and, at Dr. Hagberg's suggestion, I slept sitting propped up to keep the swelling to a minimum.

On the first full day of recovery I was able to work out and take a shower, but my skin remained red and hot all day. I continued to apply the ointment and slept propped up again. The second day was the most uncomfortable – my face was hot and swollen, and there were no signs of peeling, just an incessant itch along my hairline and chin. But little flakes appeared on my cheeks on the third day – I was finally peeling! On the fourth day I got back into life. I applied makeup for the first time, needing only a small amount of foundation that went on more smoothly than ever. I spent the day in meetings but never needed to reapply any makeup – except lipstick. However, the flaking continued so I discreetly brushed off my cheeks from time to time.

Six days after the procedure I returned to the Skin Rejuvenation Clinic for the final component of the procedure – an enzyme masque designed to stimulate collagen production and remove remaining dead skin cells. I purchased some recommended skin care products as well.

The North Star Laser Peel was just the refresher my skin needed. My skin tone is even and the fine lines around my eyes have all but disappeared. I look awake in the morning, I'm using less makeup and feeling more beautiful than I have in years. And Dr. Hagberg says my skin will continue to improve over the coming months. I don't want to look twenty years younger than I am; I just want to look the best I can right now. And thanks to the North Star Laser Peel, I'm well on my way. ■