

## The Next Generation Chemical Peel: I Tried It - and Didn't Peel

by Grace Gold



before



after

A patient immediately following a peel treatment, showing dewy skin and little redness.

Courtesy Photo

Chemical peels often have a reputation that precedes them.

When most women hear the name, they think of the burned, peeling and beet-red horror that Samantha Jones experienced in a fabled episode of *Sex and The City*.

And given my olive-toned complexion, which can be further susceptible to scarring and permanent pigmentation changes at the hands of an unskilled practitioner, I eschew peels the way vegetarians do meat.

But then PCA Skin called with a complimentary offer to try one of their next-generation peels.

It was time to reconsider.

With a history of over twenty years in the medical and clinical market as a peel formulator, PCA Skin is attributed in medical textbooks as the first maker of blended chemical products.

Chief scientist and dermatologist Dr. Jennifer Linder says the brand's philosophy is that slow and steady wins the race.

"We take a progressive approach to skincare. You don't just go in and get a major peel. You slowly work up to it. It's like running a marathon -- you would never just do it cold, but you would build up with training sessions until you could handle it," Dr. Linder tells StyleList.

And care is taken so that your trainer -- or certified consultant -- knows what she's doing. To be able to order the products, the skin pro must first take an eight hour class to learn exactly how to apply the peel, who is and isn't a candidate for the treatments, and how to customize the formula to individual skin types.

"If we focus on making the skin more healthy, then beauty follows," says Dr. Linder.

With a few fading pigmented spots leftover from a past breakout troubling my complexion, I headed to the Skin Laser & Surgery Specialists of New York & New Jersey with cautious hopes.



A patient's skin shows less pigmentation after five peel treatments. Courtesy Photo

Medical aesthetician Sophia Phan was my expert, and she led me into a soothing spa-like peel experience, complete with soft lights, massage bed, terry robe and facial massage.

It was big on the zen-factor and light on the medical feel, with no fluorescent lights shining in my face and a luxe, padded bed underneath me instead of that crunchy white sheeting.

For a treatment that can cost anywhere from \$100 to \$250 depending on the area of the country and complexity of your peel, the added pampering is a welcome treat.

When I was all prepped for the Sensi Peel that Phan personalized for my skin type and the results that I wanted -- a complexion refresher without too much peeling -- I was asked to rate the tingling from a scale of one to ten.

One layer of peel had me at a one. The second painted-on layer touched a slightly more tingly three and a half. And that's where we stopped.

A glance in the hand-held mirror while still laying down revealed instantly brightened skin, like I had turned a light on in front of my face. I was intrigued.

Over the next few days, I noticed with excitement that I was using less and less concealer to dab on those pesky fading spots. Seven days later, all but the darkest one is virtually gone now -- and a touch of concealer is all that's needed to cover it.

Yet most surprisingly, I didn't peel. Not even a little. There was no reason to use any of my stored excuses for the flakes I had imagined would appear. ("Too much time spent in the sun at the beach!" was in my pocket and ready to go.)

Dr. Linder says the lack of peeling is common, and even a desired result.

"People don't realize that you don't have to peel with a peel. They mistakenly believe that if you don't peel, you didn't get enough of a treatment. The opposite is true -- as your skin becomes healthier, you'll actually find that you peel less with treatments," says Dr. Linder.

However, I was sent home with a post-peel procedure kit filled with travel-sized goodies meant to soothe skin if I did peel -- which is offered complimentary by some PCA providers who incorporate the cost into the price of a peel, while others may charge about \$18 for it.

Who knew you could have gain without pain -- or peel?  
It may finally be time to rewrite those beauty rules.