

## Opal Daily

### The Best Cosmetic Skin Procedures Per Dermatologists

Kate Sandoval Box | April 21, 2023



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When we asked some of our favorite dermatologists to help us create the best, no-fail skincare routines for every decade, our conversations began with key, no-nonsense essentials: a gentle cleanser, a broad-spectrum SPF 30 or above, a great moisturizer...but as we talked about *reversing* the specific concerns that can come with age—dark spots, wrinkles, sagging—they leveled with us: If you want damage reversal, you should consult an experienced pro who can offer lasers, injectables, peels, energy-based treatments, and more. But with what feels like an endless scroll of new, trending skin treatments and procedures, which are worth our time, money, and pain threshold? The docs have helpful clarity:

#### Lasers

##### **for dark spots and uneven skin tone**

Nonablative resurfacing lasers, like Clear + Brilliant and LaseMD, target melasma or post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation with minimal downtime, says NYC dermatologist Daniel Belkin, MD. Skin feels sandpapery for a few days post-procedure, and then looks brighter and more even. For sun spots, mild sun damage, and uneven skin texture, Belkin often turns to the PicoSure: “This picosecond laser can offer more robust and long-term tone improvement.”

A step up from that, Fraxel or Halo lasers leave you with a week of scaly skin, “but can even out the complexion significantly,” Belkin says. Fraxel can also reduce precancerous cells: “After 50, the percentage of nonmelanoma skin cancers increases exponentially each year, so at that point I think of it like a teeth cleaning; it’s a smart health measure,” says Beverly Hills dermatologist Ava Shamban, MD. Note that if you’re prone to melasma, hyperpigmentation, or have dark skin, it’s important to go to a dermatologist with expertise in these areas.

## Chemical Peels

### **for acne, dullness, and dark spots**

“Peels don’t get a ton of attention, but they’re wonderful workhorses and an excellent bet for improving acne, radiance, and texture for most skin tones,” says New Jersey dermatologist Jeanine Downie, MD. Generally, dermatologists recommend a course of monthly peels chosen for your skin, concern, and comfort level. “Glycolic peels in particular keep skin smooth and clear, and also stimulate collagen,” says NYC dermatologist David Colbert, MD.

## Radio Frequency Microneedling

### **for fine lines, acne scars, and laxity**

These devices (brand names include Vivace and Morpheus8) puncture the skin with tiny insulated needles that deliver radio frequency energy to the dermis layer of the skin, stimulating collagen production. After a treatment, you’ll probably look like you have a sunburn for about a day. “While this is not the panacea med-spas often claim it to be, it’s a nice, low-downtime way to address texture, fine lines, and loss of firmness,” Belkin says. You may see noticeable improvement in acne scars and wrinkles after a few months.

## Injectables

### **for wrinkles, volume loss, crepiness, and spider veins**

Neurotoxin injections (brand names include Botox Cosmetic, Xeomin, Dysport, Jeuveau, and—the new kid on the block—Daxxify) inhibit muscle movement to reduce wrinkles. While they can be a preventative measure to keep skin smooth over time, “I typically suggest them when expression lines don’t disappear after your face is relaxed, which can happen as early as your 20s but more often in your mid-to late 30s,” Colbert says. Microdoses soften forehead creases, crow’s-feet, lip lines, and jowls while maintaining facial movement.

Another class of injectables includes hyaluronic acid fillers, like Restylane and Juvederm, which restore volume in the face. “I think of these as putting back the fat that’s been lost with age,” Colbert says. A bit here and there can lift the corners of the mouth, plump the lips, smooth under-eye areas, restore cheekbones, define the jawline, and more.

Sclerotherapy can address small spider veins, and bio-stimulants (like Radiesse, **Renuva**, and Sculptra) can create long-term volume restoration (especially for very thin, gaunt candidates in their 40s and older).

## Energy Devices

### **for skin tightening**

“Nearly all firming treatments beam energy to the deeper layers of the skin and the supporting connective tissue underneath using a handheld wand that we move across the skin,” says NYC dermatologist Kenneth Howe, MD. This controlled injury causes collagen to contract and spurs more growth, making skin firmer and tighter in three to six months. “Some patients seem to respond better to one form of energy more than another,” Howe notes. A device called Thermage uses radio frequency technology, which is nearly painless. “I tend to choose it for patients who have lax skin without a lot of heaviness or festoons [loose pockets of skin below the eyes],” Howe says. Sofwave and Ulthera use microfocused ultrasound. “Ulthera goes deepest, so it’s the best option for lifting skin, in my opinion,” Belkin says. It can hurt, but Pro-Nox (laughing gas) can help. Instead of sending in energy, the newest device, Ellacor, removes tiny columns of skin. The wounds tighten skin as they heal, Howe says. Plan to do three treatments a month apart.

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