**Dr Glenn Parham | Dermatologist**
**MBBS, BSc(HIM), BSc(CommSt), MMed(ClinEpi), FACD, ACMS**

**Integricare Dermatology**
MedOne Stirling Specialist Centre
T12 / 732 Karrinyup Road, Balcatta WA 6021
T: 08 6400 5678 | F: 08 6288 6666
MedOne Medical Centre
U5 / 3 Doncaster Road, Mirrabooka WA 6061
E: contact@integricaredermatology.com.au
W: www.integricaredermatology.com.au
HealthLink EDI: medonems

**Chemical Peels - What You Need to Know:**

## 1. About Chemical Peels:

*"A chemical peel is a safe (when performed by an experienced practitioner), non-surgical skin treatment that helps improve skin texture, tone, and appearance by removing the outer layer of damaged skin."*

Chemical peels temporarily wound the skin to treat medical conditions and to create aesthetic improvement. The damaged layers of skin are replaced by healthier new layers. The chemicals used, concentration and application technique determine the depth of penetration and the desirable effect achieved.

We use chemical peels that are superficial to superficial-medium depth. The chemicals utilised are any or a combination of trichloroacetic acid, resorcinol, salicylic acid, and lactic acid in varied concentrations.

Chemical peels can be used to treat the following conditions:

- Acne
- Actinic keratoses & sun damaged skin
- Dry & uneven skin surface
- Fine lines / wrinkles
- Melasma
- Uneven skin pigmentation

While chemical peels improve skin appearance, they do not halt the ageing process and alterations in skin appearance may occur over time (such as with sun exposure, hormonal changes, medications or factors unrelated to skin treatments).

## 2. Contraindications

*"If you are unsure whether any of these apply to you, please discuss with your doctor."*

### 2.1 When chemical peels are not suitable:

- Active viral, bacterial, or fungal infection (especially cold sores: Herpes Simplex Virus, HSV).
- Isotretinoin (Roaccutane) in the past three months.
- Recent facial surgery (or cosmetic facial surgery at any time).
- History of hypertrophic scar or keloid scar formation.
- Medium or deep chemical peels, dermabrasion, or laser resurfacing in past six months.
- Are pregnant, breastfeeding or trying to conceive.
- Have a sunburn or have had significant sun exposure in the last two days.
- Previous facial radiotherapy.

### 2.2 Relative contraindications:

- Recurrent cold sores.
- Current smoker.
- Immunosuppressed.
- Previous deep chemical peel or aggressive laser resurfacing.

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**3. Risks:**

Every procedure involves risk. It is important that you understand these risks and the possible complications associated with them.

- Allergic reaction to one of the products utilised in treatment.
- Colour change (pigmentary changes):
  - Increased pigmentation (hyperpigmentation), which is usually temporary.
  - Some moles or freckles (naevi, lentigines) being more noticeable.
  - Prolonged redness (erythema) or textural changes.
  - Permanent lightening of the treated area
- Infection (rare): bacterial, fungal or viral (cold sore virus: Herpes Simplex Virus, HSV).
- Acne-like eruption (temporary).
- Scarring (rare): depressed, hypertrophic or keloid.
- Small white bumps (milia).
- Skin sensitivity (usually resolves over time).
- Incomplete or partial response.

*"Most side effects are temporary and resolve within days to weeks."*

**4. Pre-Treatment & Preparation:**

- Minimise sun exposure one week prior to treatment (use a daily SPF50+ sunscreen).
- No make-up, lipstick, or jewellery (in the area being treated).
- **You must advise of any recent cold sores.**
- You may drive yourself home after the procedure. It is recommended someone drives for you.
- Avoid exfoliating medications, waxing, or shaving the face one week prior to treatment.
- Wear a loose collar or buttoned shirt on the day of treatment.
- You may be prescribed topical treatments prior to treatment such as topical tretinoin cream (e.g., ReTrieve cream) or hydroquinone. If necessary, the directions will be given to you.
- **Commence Valaciclovir 1g twice daily for one week starting the day prior to the treatment.**

**5. On the Day:**

- Baseline photographs will be taken for your medical record.
- A topical anaesthetic ***may*** be applied approximately 60 minutes prior to treatment, usually this is not required.
- The face will be cleansed, a degreasing agent will be applied (e.g., acetone) applied and then the chemical peel.
- You will experience a moderate (occasionally intense) warm, burning or stinging sensation for several minutes.
- This is a self-neutralising peel; however, a neutralising agent may be used (e.g. sodium bicarbonate).
- Cool compresses or packs will be applied until any discomfort settles.
- The skin may be frosted, white, or yellowish for up to 2 hours following the procedure, followed by redness (a blush).
- A petrolatum emollient is applied.

**6. Post-Treatment:**

**6.1 What to expect post-treatment:**

- Redness, warmth, puffiness (especially around the eyes), sensitivity, itch, tightness, scabbing, peeling and mild discomfort (like a sunburn) are normal. This settles over one week.
- Day 2-3: the skin peels (it may feel tight and turn brown prior). This generally lasts 4-10 days.
- Most people find the recovery similar to a mild sunburn and notice improvement within 1–2 weeks.
- A blush (redness) may last for several weeks, occasionally longer.

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YOUR SKIN, OUR JOURNEY

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**6.2 Uncommon and extreme responses:**

- The skin becomes very red, blisters, significant scabbing / crusting, swelling, or you are concerned regarding infection.
    - Peels can trigger an outbreak of cold sores regardless of whether you have a history of the herpes virus.
- The skin is very uncomfortable or painful (not relieved with over-the-counter analgesia).
- There is a small incidence of a flare of acne-like lesions after a peel.

**7. Aftercare:**

- **Continue the oral Valaciclovir 1g twice daily for a further six days.**
- Plain petrolatum ointment (e.g., Vaseline) applied at least twice daily for one week. The aim is to keep the skin moisturised and avoid it from drying out.
- Cool compresses and over-the counter analgesia for discomfort.
- Sun avoidance, hat, and limiting sun exposure one week until the peeling process stops, then daily SPF50+ sunscreen is recommended.
- Make-up, hairspray, shaving, perfumes, or colognes (after-shave) may be resumed once the peeling process stops.
- Gentle facial cleanser daily (e.g., Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser, or similar).

- **AVOID:**
    - **Glycolic acid, Vitamin C, or tretinoin (retinoid) creams while you are peeling. These may be resumed after 14 days.**
    - **Rubbing, scratching, picking, or 'assisting' the peeling process by pulling off the skin. This prolongs the healing process and may cause permanent scarring.**
    - **Swimming, spa baths saunas or excessive activity until the peeling process stops.**
    - **Chemical peels, dermabrasion, microneedling, or any similar interventional skin procedures to the face for one month following treatment.**

**8. Follow-up:**

- Our nurses review you at regular intervals in the initial healing period.
- Thereafter, follow-up in 2-4 weeks and subsequent photographs will be taken for documentation.
- Review often occurs again in approximately three months.