

PEELING BACK THE HANDS OF TIME:

THE ANTI-AGING  
SCIENCE BEHIND  
CHEMICAL PEELS

BY MELISSA BRYANT



not correct wrinkles, scars, or deep sun damage. This is what 90 percent of peels done in salons and doctors' offices are," said Dr. Obagi. Clinicians who were truly chemically peeling would apply acid to a patient's face, then stop at a level where they felt it had reached enough depth — a technique practiced since its inception in the late 19th century. But it was risky. Left on too long or at too high of an acidic concentration, the peel could go too deep and cause scarring — or worse — disfigurement.

Don't cry over soured milk! The fermented dairy product was actually an important part of the ancient Egyptian's skin rejuvenation regimen. Egyptian nobles bathed in sour milk in an effort to smooth their uneven skin. Lactic acid, the active ingredient in sour milk, worked as a homemade chemical peel to slough off ruptured, aging skin. To this day, mild chemical peels still contain lactic acid.

While modern beauty-seekers still turn to chemical peels for an effective, non-invasive anti-aging treatment, the procedure has received a major facelift. During the 1990s, expert clinician, Zein Obagi, MD, Medical Director of ZO Skin Health, Inc, revamped the popular facial resurfacing treatment to replace guesswork with science.

**THE REAL PEEL**

Before Dr. Obagi created the comprehensive protocol for chemical peels, what most people received when they went in for a chemical peel was a treatment that only exfoliated the skin's surface. "Doctors call these exfoliating masks peels, but they really should be called false peels because it does

In order to approach chemical peels more scientifically, Dr. Obagi considered every variable when applying a peel: Volume — what concentration of the chemical compound trichloroacetic acid (TCA) to use, as well as how much solution should be applied to a specific area, like the face or neck. By controlling the TCA concentration and slowing down its penetration, he identified clinical signs of depth to gauge when to stop a peel. Today, the controlled depth sign is a measure used by physicians performing chemical peels worldwide.

After much success, Dr. Obagi now tells his patients, "If you do the Controlled Depth Peel every four or five years, I'll keep you looking young indefinitely" — citing patients who came in looking younger 20 years later than when he first saw them. Above all, he urges patients to do their research. Be more inquisitive when it comes to peeling — search the Internet, ask your dermatologist questions, ask for references and if it seems too good to be true, chances are it probably is.

Dr. Obagi's office is located at 270 North Canon Drive, #100 in Beverly Hills, California. (310) 275-3030.