

Light Therapy

HOLIDAY BENEFIT: HAPPIER

Sunlight makes you happy. Levels of serotonin are increased both by the effect of sunlight on the optic nerve, and also by the raised levels of vitamin D caused by sunshine on the skin. According to Russell Foster, Professor of Circadian Neuroscience at Brasenose College, Oxford, light elevates our mood and sets the clock for our body's activities. The darker mornings, which don't provide this cue, send everything out of alignment. Light therapy uses intensely bright light from a light box and is the most effective treatment to date for SAD, or Seasonal Affective Disorder, the form of depression linked to lack of sunlight. 'Many of us were extremely sceptical when light boxes were introduced, but the data has convinced me, because it doesn't seem to be simply a placebo effect,' says Professor Foster. He recommends 'dawn simulators' (which light up gradually in the mornings). Phillips offer several types of Wake Up Light, including one with integral ipod dock, for £156.95 at sad.co.uk

The New Exfoliants

HOLIDAY BENEFIT: GLOWING

The new Hydrafacial is a skin resurfacing procedure which claims to reduce fine lines and brown spots and increase hydration. Find a salon at hydrfacial.co.uk. Daniel Hersheson in Harvey Nichols offers luxuriously relaxing hydrafacials to hydrate and peel the skin. From £175, 020 7201 8797.

The Enerpeel is a new ten-minute peel that can be tailored to your skin type, is painless and leaves skin looking tighter and glowing. From £80, find a provider at skinmed.co.uk or call 08701 909 369.

A skin-brightening facial with the French cosmetic brand Collin feels gorgeous, and thanks to a peel and lots of vitamin C, leaves skin radiant. From £60, collin.ltd.uk.

For home use, we adore the new Murad Active Radiance Serum (£85, murad.co.uk) which lived up to its claim of brightening skin in one week, using super powerful vitamin C complexes to stimulate collagen production and suppress hyperpigmentation.

Special Soporifics

HOLIDAY BENEFIT: RESTED

A study at the University of Miami School of Medicine showed massage therapies reduced cortisol and boosted levels of the relaxing neurotransmitters dopamine and serotonin. Aromatherapy Associates expert massages (aromatherapyassociates.com) combine the power of touch with aromatherapy oils. The latest version of the popular hot stone massages involve heated lava shells: genuine Tiger Clam shells from the Philippines heat up to give the body a sublimely relaxing massage. For the face, ceramic shells are used in combination with the sleep-inducing mineral bromide. I found the experience so relaxing that I slept like a baby during and afterwards. Lava Shell Therma Facial, from £55; Lava Shell body treatments, from £45. Find a salon at sharedbeautysecrets.com, 01869 338890.

A bath is a perfect way to unwind before sleep. The post-bath cooling produces sleep hormones. Enhance the process with the amazing Pure Retreat Bath Soak by Elemis, with relaxing lavender oil. £32 attimetospa.co.uk.

Targeted Acne Therapy

HOLIDAY BENEFIT: CLEAR SKIN

Many women find that sunlight improves their acne. The theory is that ultraviolet radiation in the sunlight kills the bacteria that is involved in acne and may damp down the inflammation. The Nlite laser emits a yellow light that kills the skin bacteria that causes acne. Tony Chu, consultant dermatologist and Medical Director of the West London Dermatology Centre says, 'Having treated hundreds of patients with Nlite laser I believe it is a truly effective and drug-free solution to acne, with no side effects' (around £150 for a full face treatment at The West London Dermatology Centre, 0208 742 2204). For home use, the Aknicare skincare system is the only topical treatment to work within the skin to reduce oil production by up to 68 per cent, normalise skin cell turnover, reduce skin thickening and calm redness. Aknicare set of three products: from £29.99 at aknicare.co.uk, 08701 909 369.

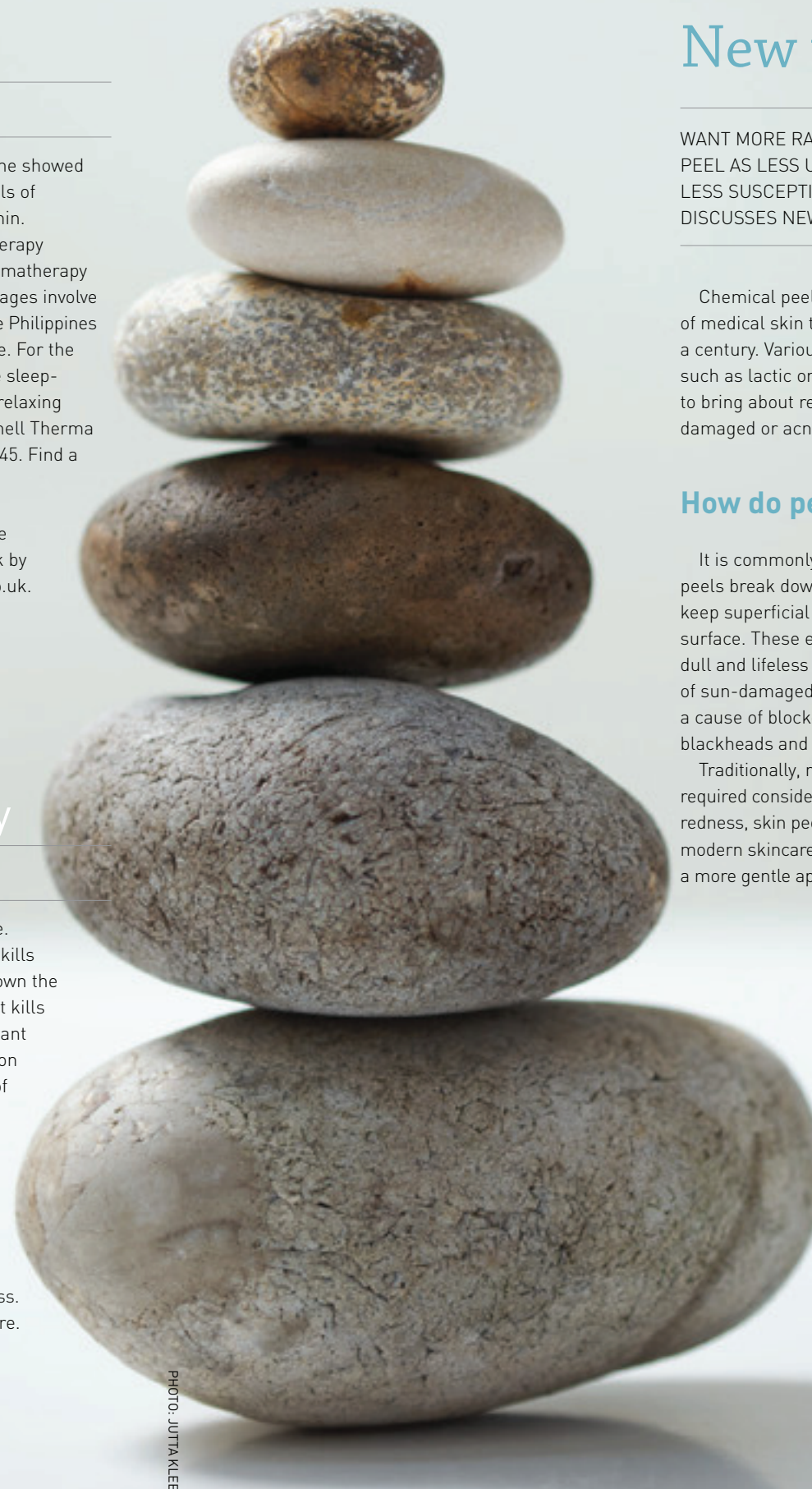


PHOTO: JUTTA KLEE

New ways to get glowing

WANT MORE RADIANT SKIN? THE WINTER MONTHS ARE THE BEST TIME FOR A SKIN PEEL AS LESS ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT MEANS YOUR NEW LAYER OF SENSITIVE SKIN IS LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO UV DAMAGE. CONSULTANT PLASTIC SURGEON **PAUL BANWELL** DISCUSSES NEW GENERATION COSMETIC PEELS

Chemical peels have been a mainstay of medical skin treatment for more than a century. Various organic peeling agents such as lactic or salicylic acid are applied to bring about rejuvenation of sun-damaged or acne-prone skin.

How do peels work?

It is commonly believed that chemical peels break down the protein bonds that keep superficial skin cells sticking to the surface. These excess cells cause the dry, dull and lifeless appearance and texture of sun-damaged skin. These cells are also a cause of blocked pores leading to blackheads and pimples.

Traditionally, medical-strength peels required considerable downtime and caused redness, skin peeling and inflammation, but modern skincare consumers are looking for a more gentle approach.

Enter the era of the 'cosmetic peel', led by cosmeceutical companies such as Rationale Skincare, whose Procedure Peeling System is the choice of the UK's leading medical skin specialists.

Cosmetic peels are mostly performed for skin rejuvenation and ongoing maintenance, replacing other forms of facial treatment amongst discerning beauty consumers. They are best performed by medical professionals such as plastic surgeons, dermatologists or cosmetic physicians.

I recommend regular cosmetic peels for virtually every patient. They help keep skin in top condition when combined with the right daily skincare routine. In my opinion, they are an ongoing part of maintaining healthy skin for a lifetime.

Cosmetic chemist and Director of Rationale Skincare, Richard Parker, explains that different peeling agents are helpful for specific skin conditions. "For younger, sun-damaged skin with a few monthly breakouts, we recommend lactic acid, which is effective but mild. For a drier, more mature skin, pyruvic acid has more of an energising effect." The choice of which peeling agent to apply is made by a doctor based on each skin's unique needs.

The benefits of chemical peels include a softer, more hydrated skin surface, clearance of blotchy brown pigmentation and breakouts and, perhaps best of all, they help restore the skin's radiance, luminosity and glow. **EB**

Mr Paul Banwell practices in Kent and Sussex. Call 0845 468 0044 or email pbanwell@safecosmeticsurgery.co.uk.

For more information on cosmetic chemical peels, visit wellbournecosmetic.com or call 0845 260 0246.