

inner and outer harmony

Sydney cosmetic physician
Dr Joseph Hkeik discusses
methods to balance the way
people feel with the way they
look. Lauren Alexander reports.

People now feel much younger in their 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s than their parents and grandparents did at the same age. However, wrinkly, dry and tired skin can make others think we are older than we feel. 'It is that discrepancy between how we look and feel that brings most of my patients forward seeking a solution that will harmonise their inner feeling with their outer presentation,' says Sydney cosmetic physician Dr Joseph Hkeik. For this reason the need to maintain good skin quality and repair any skin damage is forever increasing.

In his practice, Dr Hkeik likes to focus on educating patients about skin ageing. 'I always start by explaining how skin naturally ages,' he says. Skin has two main layers: the deeper dermis, which contains all the live cells and the more superficial epidermis, which contains the dead, keratinised layer of cells. As ageing occurs, he says, fewer and fewer new cells are made at a decreasing speed. The consequence of this is that the healthy, radiant layer of skin becomes thinner. In addition, the epidermis stops shedding the old dead cells and becomes thicker and appears dull, scaly and dry. These changes, together with the loss of collagen, elastin and hyaluronic acid from below the dermis, cause the skin to be less plump and no longer springs back to its former position. This is when we start to see sagging skin and the development of furrows and wrinkles.

'There are other external factors that prematurely age our skin,' Dr Hkeik warns. These factors affect our skin as early as our 20s. 'I am astonished by the number of new patients coming to my clinic who are not using protection against the sun on a regular basis. These are all simple measures we can all afford and need to do every day in order to protect our skin and prevent the risk of cancer,' he says. 'In addition, cigarette smoking, pollution, lack of exercise and poor nutrition can all lead to premature ageing of the skin.'

Dr Hkeik uses a combination of minimally invasive skin photorejuvenation procedures to help achieve healthy skin, ranging from medical lasers, such as Fraxel, Laser Genesis and Limelight, to chemical peels to refresh and refine facial skin. Botulinum toxin and dermal fillers are also used to improve the appearance of lines and loss of volume.

'Fraxel 1550 has changed the way we rejuvenate skin in my practice,' says Dr Hkeik. 'In the three years since Fraxel was introduced, it has become one of the best ways to give patients maximum results with minimum down time.' Local anaesthetic cream and cold air is sufficient to numb the skin and make the procedure comfortable. He says the skin normally becomes red – as though 'sun-kissed' – for 24 to 48 hours and there is no need to take time off work in most cases.

While his patients will notice a difference after one treatment, correcting signs of skin damage may require four to five sessions as Fraxel results are cumulative. Fraxel

can help correct acne scarring, pigmentation and sun spots, as well as helping the skin to become clearer and more even in colour and tone. Other facial rejuvenation procedures used by Dr Hkeik include the Cutera Limelight and Laser Genesis. These lasers treat superficial signs of ageing of the skin such as freckles, pigmentation, redness, fine capillaries and lines and enlarged pores.

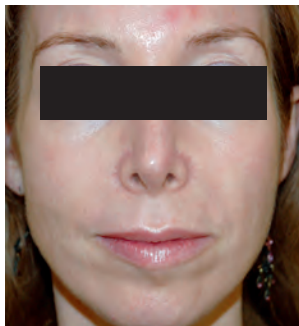
Chemical peels have been revolutionised in the last two years, resulting in highly refined products such as Results Rx and Cosmedix, which involve minimal irritation and down time. According to Dr Hkeik, peels are important to rejuvenate skin as they refine the old top layer and help the fibroblast cells to produce more collagen, thus restoring a healthy appearance to the skin.

Botulinum toxin and dermal fillers also play a very important role not only in skin rejuvenation but also in soft-tissue volume loss resulting from the ageing process. 'Botulinum toxin works like a wrinkle eraser for dynamic wrinkles in the upper face, and dermal fillers play a similar role in the mid and lower face,' says Dr Hkeik. 'For instance, lip ageing means the corners of the mouth droop (mouth frown), the shaped area of the upper lip (Cupid's bow) begins to flatten out, and we start to lose the appearance of full lips. Lip lines and wrinkles develop, and most women start to suffer from lipstick bleeds. The solution is total lip rejuvenation with dermal fillers such as Restylane, Juvéderm or Aquamid.'

Dr Hkeik says rejuvenation treatments take between 30 minutes and one hour and require minimal or no down time. He prefers to tailor combination treatment programs to suit individuals. 'The aim is to improve the appearance of the whole face,' he says. **acsm**



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DR JOSEPH HKEIK

Cosmetic Physician, MB.BS (Sydney) FRACGP, D.P.Derm (UK)
Member CPSA, Fellow of The ACCS (Medical Fellow)