

BY MARIA MASTERS

PREP WORK

Toying with the idea of trying a cosmetic treatment before a reunion, graduation or wedding? Choosing which procedure to get—and when to have it done—requires careful planning. We asked Wendy E. Roberts, M.D., a dermatologist in Rancho Mirage, California, for the secrets to getting great results.

→BLOTCHY, UNEVEN SKIN

The treatment: Chemical peels. A chemical solution is applied to your face for about 10 minutes to remove the damaged outer skin layers and improve tone.

What to know: Schedule a consultation at least two months before the big day. You may need multiple peels and time for the redness to fade. “Be wary of getting one in a medi spa, or a salon that has expanded into skin services,” says Dr. Roberts. A dermatologist has more training. Light peels can start at \$100, but deeper ones are more expensive.

→LIGHT WRINKLES AND FINE LINES

The treatment: Neurotoxins (Botox, Dysport, Xeomin). These injectables work by temporarily paralyzing facial muscles, stopping you from making expressions that cause lines.

What to know: Choose an experienced dermatologist or plastic surgeon, says Dr. Roberts. Ask how long they’ve been doing the procedure and request before-and-after pictures of previous clients. It can take 12 to 72 hours to notice any changes, so schedule treatment at least a week before any upcoming events. You may have a headache, pain or bruising for a day or two. Cost is about \$350.

→SPIDER VEINS

The treatment: Sclerotherapy. A liquid is injected into the vein, sealing it and causing it to gradually fade.

What to know: A dermatologist, plastic surgeon or vein specialist should perform the procedure. You may experience some bruising and swelling afterward and need to wear compression stockings or a dressing on the area, says Dr. Roberts. Have your consultation three months in advance of the event, as treatments are scheduled four to eight weeks apart and typically three sessions are required. Expect to pay about \$330.



Q&A

HOW DO I KNOW WHEN TO TAKE IBUPROFEN OR ACETAMINOPHEN?

Contrary to popular opinion, the two aren't always interchangeable. “Both relieve pain, but they work differently,” says Robert Weber, Pharm.D., senior director of pharmaceutical services at The Ohio State University Medical Center. Figure out which you need with the chart at right.

IF YOU HAVE	TRY	WHY IT WORKS
A headache	Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen	In the correct doses, both are safe choices for addressing mild-to-moderate pain.
Muscle soreness or sprains	Ibuprofen	Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) relieve swelling from soft-tissue injuries.
A fever	Acetaminophen	It reduces body temperature.
Menstrual pain	Ibuprofen	NSAIDs block the production of hormones called prostaglandins, which cause cramps.

Photo: ACP/Trunk Archive