

SKIN REPAIR

REVERSING THE DAMAGE

This regular column offers an insight each issue into different health and medical topics relevant to women. Here, Flourish Editor Jane Willis, shares her experience of discovering what's beneath the skin's surface - premature aging and sun damage, and what can be done to repair it!

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LOOKING at my baby's soft, plump, spongy, unlined, smooth and delectably deliciously unblemished skin, I vow to Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide to protect her from the harsh sun and the damage it will do.

I remember my mother telling me to “Put on some sunscreen! Take a hat! Stay out of the sun otherwise you'll end up with skin like an old leather boot” as I was heading out the door to climb onto the roof to sun bake with my coconut smelling Reef Oil or Johnston's Baby Oil in hand to expedite the tanning process. Ah the memories.

Through my editorship of Flourish, I had the opportunity to visit the specialists at Assure Medispa in Subiaco, and discuss the state of my skin on my face and look at ways to improve its clarity and appearance, reduce signs of premature aging and repair any damaged skin.



Image : Kathy Wynn

Assure Medispa is owned and operated by the team at the Western Australian Plastic Surgery Centre and offers non-surgical, non-invasive cosmetic treatments. Registered Nurses and Plastic Surgeons can give expert advice specific to each individual's needs.

I first met with Phoebe Butler, Managing Medical Aesthetician, looking very sleek in her long, white coat. She discussed what I would like to improve about my skin, before putting me under the Beau Visage™ machine to give us a clear indication of my skin's condition.

At this stage I considered putting in Before and After photos to this little article (or Editor's pic!), but promptly changed my mind when I saw them – would do nothing for magazine sales.

Under soft, muted mood lighting, my skin looks OK...on the surface anyway. Beau Visage™ uses the latest technology to see up to 2mm under the skin and shows the distribution of blood and melanin that determines how your face appears to the world. Wearing a shower cap, eyes closed, no smiling and resting my chin on a special holder to keep my head still, a series of photographs were taken before the machine calculated my skin age.

I'm 41, or is it 42?, and my skin age showed up as 48, indicating a high level of sun damage. My Fitzpatrick Skin Type is 'Fair Skin' – always burns, sometimes tans. (These days I wouldn't know if I tan or not, as unless I'm having a spray tan, I'm much more conscientious and aware of the damage caused by the sun – I even wear driving gloves.)

Phoebe suggested a course of IPL - Intense Pulsed Light therapy - Photorejuvenation treatments to improve my facial skin tone and surface imperfections. The imperfections receptive to IPL include skin redness, tiny veins and brown spots.

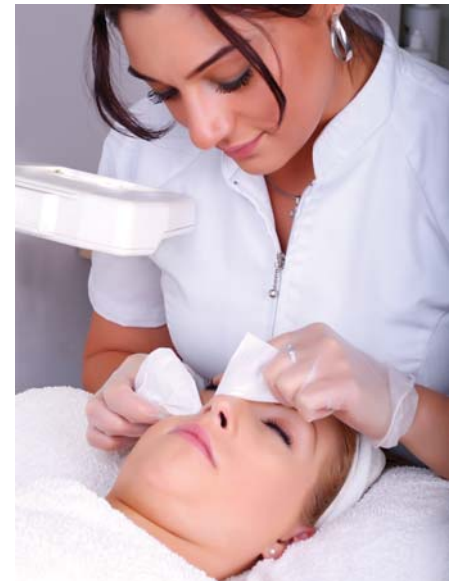
In order to have my skin in optimum condition for the treatments, ensuring the best results possible, Catherine Biedermann from Advanced Cosmeceuticals very kindly provided some Skinceutical products to complement the IPL. I spent two weeks religiously applying all the products (and there were a few of them!) morning and night, and my skin looked much better even before the IPL.

The actual IPL itself was a fairly straightforward procedure. I was advised that each 'pulse' would feel like a little flick of a rubber band. Maryann, who has trained and practised for many years in the US, performed the treatment and was a wealth of information about IPL and the varying qualities and types of IPL machines and regulation of who and how the treatment can be performed in different parts of the world.

'3,2,1...Flick!'



I relaxed; it wasn't too uncomfortable, and lasted about an hour.

Later that day, my skin had lots of little dark patches concentrated in certain areas which happened to be where my skin was most visibly pigmented. Maryann described it as looking like 'Milo' sitting on the skin's surface. These lasted for only a couple of days. I wouldn't have wanted to pose for any family portrait, but managed to get out and about and no one really noticed (or commented anyway) about the markings on my skin. The spots flaked off without me noticing, and the remaining skin underneath was much more even.



Maryann stressed to me the importance of staying out of the sun immediately after having IPL done. This is vital as new brown spots, tiny veins and redness may appear with new sun damage, however they can be treated. Prevention is the key with sun damage.

I had planned to have three treatments, on the advice of Phoebe and Maryann, but after the second treatment, the results were so good, and my skin responded so well to IPL, that we all agreed that the third session wasn't necessary.

My skin really hasn't looked as good as this for years and what I'm really enjoying is how evenly toned my skin is without foundation. I continue to be diligent with sun protection and harp on to my older girls exactly the things my Mum used to say to me...  

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