

Scratching the Surface

Esthetician Rikki Kusy explains the pros and cons of an anti-aging exfoliation treatment that is gaining popularity.

IN TODAY'S MARKET, WE ARE BOMBARDED with new products and procedures designed to help us look younger, and one procedure that has recently received more recognition on the anti-aging front is dermaplaning. Although many people are still unfamiliar with it, dermaplaning has been around for the last 35 years and has been primarily performed by dermatologists. But now that it is becoming better known, there is controversy over who can perform the treatment. Also referred to as epidermal leveling, dermaplaning is a procedure that involves scraping the skin at a 45-degree angle using a scalpel-like device called a dermablade, or dermatome, to remove the uppermost layer of dead skin cells. It is a physical exfoliation that, unlike a scrub or microdermabrasion, provides the added benefit of removing vellus hair, often referred to as peach fuzz, from the face.

There are many benefits to dermaplaning. Once clients enter their 30s, the natural cell-turnover process begins to slow down, causing a layer of dead skin cells on the surface. This buildup accentuates the appearance of wrinkles, dulls the skin, and results in makeup looking cakey. During this time, clients also produce more vellus hair, or peach fuzz. Think about it this way: clinical research suggests that men who shave every day look younger longer. Daily shaving removes not only hair but also dead skin cells. Have you ever

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noticed the difference between the beard area and the eyes and forehead? It is clear that the areas that haven't been shaved show more rapid signs of aging. This removal of the skin barrier also allows for even and increased penetration of active ingredients in both treatments and homecare products, which makes dermaplaning an excellent service to enhance the effectiveness of chemical peels and laser procedures. It can also be used post-peel to remove any remaining shedding skin.

The controversy arises due to the nature of the device. Because the blade is made of surgical steel, many cosmetology boards don't think estheticians are capable of using such a device. And because most schools cannot or do not teach this procedure, the board's rulings are justified. For those states that do allow the procedure, many skincare specialists seek out additional training prior to performing the procedure. There are DVDs on the market that provide limited education, but I believe it is essential that an aspiring practitioner have at least three hours of hands-on coaching in addition to watching demonstrations. Dermaplaning is not a difficult procedure to learn, but there are necessary rules and safety procedures to follow.

There is a lot of confusion on which states allow skincare specialists to perform the procedure and in what environment, such as a traditional spa, a medical spa, or a medical office. All states differ in their rules and regulations. Some states do not allow any sharp instruments, such as lancets for the removal of milia (small keratin-filled cysts), while other states do not permit estheticians to perform microdermabrasion. Each state's laws are radically different, so it is imperative to research where your state stands on the issue. Also, be sure to check that your insurance liability is covered for dermaplaning, because many times this is an additional coverage option. The procedure must be legal in the environment for which the practitioner is seeking coverage.

Dermaplaning is a safe and highly requested treatment that, when professionally trained and utilizing the right tool, estheticians are more than capable of performing. Most women over the age of 30 are excellent candidates, and with the treatment repeated every 30 days, client loyalty and income opportunities abound. Once all of our state boards



unite to mandate guidelines for a master esthetician's license, we can truly embrace our profession and provide advanced services such as dermaplaning to our clients in every state.—*Rikki Kusy*

Rikki Kusy is an esthetician licensed in Arizona and California. She has worked for several prominent cosmetic surgeons and owned a medical spa. She is the founder of the Arizona Aesthetics Association, a non-profit trade association dedicated to providing continuing education and networking, as well as a mentoring program for students attending esthetics schools. She currently provides professional hands-on training in dermaplaning and is a distributor of dermaplanetx blades, a tool designed by an esthetician specifically for dermaplaning. For more information, please visit www.dermaplanetx.com.

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