

## Laser skin rejuvenation

By Anabel Costa, M.D.

**W**ith the multitude of commitments to our work and daily lives, time has never been a more precious commodity. Yet, the pressure to look healthy, youthful and attractive has also never been greater. Men and women, whether caring for children in the home or working high profile careers, want to look their best.

Obviously, too much work and not enough rest can make anyone look tired. However, the normal aging process is enough to give one the appearance of being tired and sluggish. Sagging brows and facial skin can project an aura of poor health and inadequate rest, which in turn affects the image one projects to the world. One of the main reasons for poor skin tone is the gradual degeneration of col-

lagen as we age. After age 25, our bodies lose collagen at a rate of 1 percent to 1.5 percent a year. Wouldn't it be great if there were a way to slow this process or, even better, a way to replenish lost collagen? And wouldn't it be fantastic if this could be done without surgery and without recovery time?

Fortunately, for those interested in healthy looking skin, such a treatment now exists. It is called laser collagen remodeling. This laser toning treatment stimulates new collagen production and can be done in a quick lunch-hour session. To understand how it works, one must first understand the role collagen plays in our skin.

Collagen is the "backbone" of our skin, much like the framework to a house. In

fact, collagen accounts for 90 percent of the volume of our skin. As we age, our collagen bands relax, causing our skin to sag and fine lines and wrinkles to develop. Laser collagen remodeling helps to reverse this process.

The laser energy penetrates the deep collagen layer inside the skin and gently heats and stimulates new growth of collagen, resulting in tightening of the skin. Just like lifting weights stresses muscles resulting in new muscle growth and toning, this deep heating of the collagen fibroblasts also results in new collagen growth. As the collagen layer thickens, skin tone and elasticity improve and fine wrinkles visibly diminish. In fact, this new collagen growth can result in up to a 40 percent tightening of the skin. Over the following months, the skin "rebuilds" from the inside out and stimulates the production of smoother, healthier looking skin. For patients with deep wrinkles that have had a facelift, this is a wonderful treatment to maintain and extend their surgical results.

Just as one session of weight training would do little to improve muscle tone, improving skin tone also requires a series of treatments. Interestingly, new collagen continues to be laid down for months after a treatment. Once the desired effect has been achieved, the improvements can be maintained by periodic touch-up treatments. However, because we are stimulating the body's own collagen to grow, results are not seen overnight. There is a gradual change, which is noted over weeks to months. For those who like to be discreet about their cosmetic treatments, the fact that results are gradual can be a plus.

Although collagen remodeling cannot eliminate deep scars or wrinkles, it is, nevertheless, a welcome treatment for those with fine wrinkles, acne scarring and general poor skin tone.

*Anabel Costa is a certified nurse practitioner at Advanced Vein Center and Aesthetics.*

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