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Going toward the light takes on new meaning for those seeking healthier, younger looking skin

July 9, 2006

Advances in photo therapy are moving at light speed. If, in the next few years, everyone around you seems to look younger, there are reasons for it.

Among the most intriguing options is Max 7, an LED therapy (light emitting diode) that rejuvenates skin using seven wavelengths of light. It can improve skin tone, diminish fine wrinkles, and brighten your complexion. Doctors often describe the treated skin as "glowing."

It's noninvasive, completely painless, and there's no downtime. It's suitable for all ethnic and age groups, and its cost is very competitive with other advanced forms of skin rejuvenation.

Max 7 is a preprogrammed treatment delivered by a robotic arm that sweeps the subject's face with pure colors of light that change colors depending on the treatment selected.

Pat Gallina, 51, of Bartlett, was bothered by smoker's lines around her mouth. She saw little change after one treatment with Max 7. But now, after her third, "I can see a big difference," she said. Her mouth lines "have just about disappeared. My skin looks more youthful and my complexion is changing. It looks more moist."

Gallina was treated by Dr. Audra Nagel, a chiropractor and owner of Innate Wellness in Cordova who has had the device for approximately three months.

Nagel said her clients usually buy a package of six visits for \$420 and come twice a week. Each treatment lasts around 15 to 30 minutes. The light bathes the face, neck and chest. Some clients treat their hands by putting them on their chests.

It's generally thought that twice yearly treatments will maintain the effects.

"For some, it increases time between Botox injections," she said. "We've seen clients who used Restylane (an injectable filler) not need Restylane anymore." Nagel uses it on herself to soften her crow's feet.

In mid-July she will move her practice to larger offices at 256 Germantown Bend Cove from her present offices nearby.

Max 7 has been offered for about a year at Choices Center at MECA, part of MECA Eye and Laser Center at 6485 Poplar. MECA is owned by a group of ophthalmologists, including Dr. Jerre Freeman. Freeman and Dr. Robert Dotson, also an ophthalmologist, are partners in Choices,

which offers aesthetic treatments, including hair removal, vein reduction, wrinkle reduction and permanent makeup.

For enhanced results, Choices uses Max 7 in combination with Harmony, which Choices uses as an advanced florescent technology and a form of Intense Pulsed Light. Eight Max 7 treatments plus two treatments with Harmony are \$1,000.

For most patients, "I'd say you can knock 5 to 10 years off their faces with this," said Dotson.

"It's elegant, simple and safe," said Freeman, about Max 7. "We have a lot of baby boomers and most will work until they drop. They have to. They like to look better so they can remain competitive, but they don't have a ton of money or six months to take off."

Kathy Williams, 51, is using Max 7 to treat her sebboreic dermatitis, a condition she has fought unsuccessfully for 10 years. She called her skin "red and inflamed. It looked awful and felt worse."

She also had three treatments with Max 7 alone and said, "My skin looked so dramatically different and felt so much better." Most of the redness is gone. She also thinks her skin look "hydrated" and younger.

Max 7 was launched in the fall of 2003. There are only 120 units in this country. It was designed by Jennifer Brodeur, a former biology and chemistry teacher, and Charles Mercier, a mechanical engineer. They co-own Flip4 of Quebec, which makes Max 7.

Brodeur explained that LED works by triggering the body to convert light energy into cell energy and prompting the skin to produce collagen and elastin. LED is not as intense as a laser, doesn't penetrate as deeply, does not heat the skin and doesn't damage tissue, she said. In fact, it produces no more energy than a 25-watt light bulb.

Each wavelength produces a different effect. Red, for example, increases circulation and stimulates collagen production. Green is an anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial agent that can reduce rosacea and redness. Blue soothes the skin.

Max 7 works slowly over time. But some patients say they like that. You lie in a quiet room, and let a rainbow of light pass over you, while meditating your way to a younger complexion.

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