

Sticking Your Neck Out

Skin treatments are available to get rid of “turkey neck” and “crepe skin” BY DR. FIONA WRIGHT

As we age, the skin on our necks becomes noticeably wrinkled and flabby, resulting in the not-so-beautiful descriptions such as “turkey neck” or “crepe skin.” Most people completely ignore and neglect this delicate area in their daily skincare routine. It will most likely never see any exfoliating scrub, moisturizer or daily sunscreen.

A close-up look will reveal the damages of such neglect. In most cases, reconstruction to the neck is extraordinarily painful, as well as costly, so it becomes exceedingly important to address the problem before it occurs.

Regular exfoliation is imperative to the renewal of skin cells on the neck and face. Exfoliation can be as simple as using a mild daily exfoliating cleanser and using a more intensive exfoliating mask once a week. Follow this with a generous application of a daily and nightly deep moisturizer.

Sun damage is also a major contributor to wrinkly skin, unwanted dark spots and redness on the neck and face, so your daily moisturizer should contain a minimum SPF of 30.

While the skin on your neck is not as sensitive as the skin on your face, it does require attention.

The “Texas Red Neck” is a combination of brown pigmentation and a network of tiny red blood vessels causing discoloration from chronic sun exposure. The best treatment to remove this is a series of Photo facials (intense pulse light treatments) that will shrink the blood vessels and lighten the brown pigmentation. Photodynamic Photo Facial is an advanced combination treatment using Levulan, which will aggressively treat existing pre-cancerous skin lesions and also address those not yet diagnosed. This advanced treatment creates a light peel that will improve skin texture.

Before neck wrinkle networks deepen, get refurbished, smoother skin appearances using a regular schedule of microdermabrasion treatments. This is an early remedy for facial and neck wrinkles, as each treatment increases skin exfoliation that, over time, reduces and virtually eliminates surface lines. However, with more aging and sun exposure, deeper lines and wrinkles are more prevalent, which will require a more aggressive laser exfoliation treatment.

Unlike the old carbon dioxide lasers, which doctors could never

perform on the neck because of the risk of scarring, the newer “gold standard” fractional resurfacing lasers are the current treatment of choice. The latest laser technology to achieve great results is the Palomar 1540. This laser creates many microchannels that penetrate into the dermis far below the outer most skin layer causing collagen contraction and remodeling. It leaves the outermost layer of skin intact, to act as a barrier to the elements while the deeper tissues heal and tighten. There is negligible downtime (1-2 days of slight swelling) and no reason to miss work.

A similar laser, the Fraxel, is also a popular treatment, but the micro-channels do not penetrate quite as deeply as the 1540, and treatments have a longer recovery period.

Usually where there is a wrinkle, there is sagging skin, and the neck is no exception. There is now a myriad of skin-tightening devices available that heat the skin to a certain temperature, causing collagen and elastin to contract. This creates a tighter, firmer neckline.

To choose wisely however, you must decide if you have a thin “turkey neck” or a neck with extra fat and “wobbly bits.” The first neck type can achieve skin tightening with the above mentioned Palomar 1540. The latter would be an ideal candidate for the VelaContour. Both require a series of treatments and maintenance.

Another fascinating treatment for neck rejuvenation is botox. The platysma muscle is the most important neck structure responsible for the appearance of the aging neck. When this thin sheet of muscle on the neck begins to sag, it forms vertical bands. Injections of botox cosmetic into these vertical bands help to flatten them and smooth the neck, creating a more youthful neckline.

Remember that while the skin on your neck is not as sensitive as the skin on your face, it does require attention. Applying sunscreen if you are expecting to reveal your neck and chest to the sun for long periods of time is the first step. But, if you need to take the next step, these non-surgical treatments will free you from your scarf and turtleneck.

Say hello to a beautiful “swan neck” and “rose petal” skin with just a little preventative skincare. **A**

An industry leader in non-surgical cosmetic procedures, Dr. Fiona Wright at Skin M.D. & Beyond, serves Plano, Dallas and surrounding areas. She has been featured locally on NBC5, ABC8 and in national magazines such as Elle, Good Housekeeping and Redbook. To learn more, visit www.FionaWrightMD.com or SkinMDandBeyond.com.