



By Natalie Druga

Maybe beauty is only skin deep, but it's no secret that every bride-to-be in the world wants that skin looking more beautiful and radiant than ever when she glides down the aisle.

Every pair of eyes she has ever known (and that her parents have ever known) will be on her as she moves from her father's arm to her groom's hand. There will be more pictures taken of her this one weekend than in the last five years combined—pictures that will be framed above fireplaces and endlessly flipped through in photo albums.

As a new bride who tied the knot just six months ago, I can assure you that it is absolutely imperative to feel the most breathtakingly beautiful you've ever felt on that spectacular day. The dress, the flowers, the music—all of these can be perfect, but if you feel wrinkly or saggy or broken out, you just won't feel right.

"Start with your skincare professional when you start with your wedding planner," recommends Dr. Fiona Wright of the Aesthetic Institute of Plano.

Determine exactly what your concerns are, and draw up a plan with your cosmetic physician. A countdown to beauty on your wedding day is presented here.

6+ Months before "I Do"

This is the time to address body-shaping issues. Scars, back acne, brown spots, sun damage in the neck and décolleté, cellulite, texture changes (those tiny bumps on your arms)—these are all common concerns for brides-to-be, according to Dr. Wright.

"These concerns require several treatments over several months," she says. Chemical peels, exfoliating treatments, and resurfacing

techniques can help quell these issues. Photofacial is gaining in popularity as an effective tool to treat color issues such as sunspots and rosacea.

"For optimal results, photofacials need to be performed monthly, for at least five treatments," says Dr. Wright. "If you are prone to redness at all, this is one treatment you certainly need to consider. On your wedding day, your emotions are running high and all the excitement could have you overheating. Being in the sun, drinking alcohol—all these elements make the ruddiness worse."

All the while, you'll be photographed every step of the way. The way that you photograph is definitely something you need to keep in mind; not only do you want to look stunning in person, but sometimes facial shadows and loss of elasticity can be pronounced in pictures. Study photographs and see where your face needs contouring or filling. Restylane and Botox are a great twosome for sculpting.

"As with hair coloring and make-up, you need to do a 'dry run' about six to eight months before the wedding to determine the ideal amounts of each," Dr. Wright advises: Use the Botox/Restylane power-duo to sculpt your face, contour eyebrows, plump lips, and zap smile lines. After your trial run, ascertain with your physician if you need to do more or less for the actual ceremony. Botox takes about three months to wear off, and Restylane takes anywhere from six to eight months. Plan accordingly, and plan on another treatment four to eight weeks before the big day.

4-6 Months before "I Do"

"Microdermabrasion is an excellent way to

resurface your skin," says Dr. Wright. She strongly recommends a complete regime.

"This is a four to six month process," she says. "Do one treatment every two weeks for 12 weeks, then monthly up to the four to six month mark." Many women try to get by with only two or three treatments and wonder why they don't see staggering benefits, according to the doctor. "It's after this four-plus month treatment schedule when strangers will walk up to you and notice that you've got great skin."

If you have a minimum of five months until your wedding and need more intense treatment, a more invasive option is a micro laser peel. Candidates for this procedure are those with acne scars, deep marks, or deep brown spots.

2-3 Months before "I Do"

Fear not; you still have time to make a difference.

"A little work is better than no work," assures Dr. Wright. You can still work on a Botox/Restylane routine (without the dry run); just work with your physician within the timeframe that you have.

"It's not too late to address contouring and texture issues with microdermabrasion or a chemical peel," says Dr. Wright. "You can still soften brown spots and smooth your skin."

You can also smooth the rest of your body using laser hair removal. Who wants to worry about stubble while prancing in the surf of Maui or St. Bart's with your new hubby?

"You'll need four to six treatments," Dr. Wright recommends. "This can be done even two to three months before your wedding."

2 Weeks before "I Do"

"Get a facial," laughs Dr. Wright.

You don't want to try a new treatment this close to your wedding day. But you will want to go to a spa, pamper yourself, and think beautiful thoughts.

Final Thoughts to Consider

"Consult a few cosmetic physicians before you settle on one," advises Dr. Wright. "You wouldn't go with the first florist you visit or the first dress you try on. Start early so you can address each of your concerns. Be sure to have a consultation first, and make sure the doctor takes the time to understand your needs. It's important that you are comfortable with your physician; this is a partnership between doctor and patient."

Your wedding day will be the most beautiful day of your life, so enjoy every second. Plan ahead, and walk down the aisle with the confidence and poise that come with knowing you look your best. ■