

Series Editor: William W. Huang, MD, MPH

Chemical Peels

Jenna O'Neill, MD

Dr. O'Neill is from Buffalo Medical Group, New York. The author reports no conflict of interest.

Peel	Depth ^a	Concentration	Indications ^b	Notes
Glycolic acid	Superficial (epidermis to papillary dermis)	20%–70%; α-hydroxy acid	Acne, rosacea, mild photodamage/dyspigmentation, keratosis pilaris	Must be neutralized with water or 10% bicarbonate solution
Salicylic acid	Superficial	20%–35%; β-hydroxy acid	Acne, melasma/dyspigmentation, mild to moderate photodamage	Frosting occurs due to precipitation of salicylic acid crystals, do not use in patients with aspirin allergy due to risk for salicylism, does not need neutralization
Trichloroacetic acid	Superficial, medium (papillary to reticular dermis)	10%–35% (superficial depth), 40%–50% (medium depth)	Melasma/dyspigmentation, fine rhytides, actinic keratosis, moderate rhytides, scarring	Frosting noted at concentrations >25%, frosting peaks around 2–4 minutes, does not need neutralization
Jessner	Superficial	14% salicylic acid, 14% lactic acid, 14% resorcinol in ethanol base	Acne, melasma/dyspigmentation, fine rhytides	May be used to increase depth of penetration of other peels such as retinoic acid, does not need neutralization
Baker-Gordon	Deep (mid reticular dermis)	Phenol, septisol, croton oil in distilled water	Actinic keratosis, severe photodamage, acne scarring, moderate rhytides	Requires cardiac monitoring due to potential cardiotoxicity of phenol; risk for acne/milia, prolonged erythema, permanent hypopigmentation, and hyperpigmentation; use limited to Fitzpatrick skin types I–III

^aAntiviral prophylaxis should be prescribed for patients undergoing medium-depth or deeper peels.

^bTreatment of acne scarring should be deferred for at least 6 months after completion of a course of isotretinoin due to risk for hypertrophic scarring.

Practice Questions

- 1. Which peel requires neutralization?**
 - a. Baker-Gordon
 - b. glycolic acid
 - c. Jessner
 - d. salicylic acid
 - e. trichloroacetic acid

- 2. Which peel contains resorcinol?**
 - a. Baker-Gordon
 - b. glycolic acid
 - c. Jessner
 - d. salicylic acid
 - e. trichloroacetic acid

- 3. Which peel would be the best treatment of severe actinic photodamage?**
 - a. Baker-Gordon
 - b. glycolic acid
 - c. Jessner
 - d. salicylic acid
 - e. trichloroacetic acid

- 4. Which peel would *not* be indicated for treatment of melasma in a patient with Fitzpatrick skin type IV?**
 - a. Baker-Gordon
 - b. glycolic acid
 - c. Jessner
 - d. salicylic acid
 - e. trichloroacetic acid

- 5. Which peel is a β -hydroxy acid?**
 - a. Baker-Gordon
 - b. glycolic acid
 - c. Jessner
 - d. salicylic acid
 - e. trichloroacetic acid

Fact sheets and practice questions will be posted monthly.