

Complexion Porefection

Cosmetic Dermatologist
Dr. Deborah Sarnoff
Reveals Her
Secret Weapons
Against
Acne Scars

by Wendy Lewis



One are the days when your choice was either to live with unsightly memories of severe acne flare-ups or undergo drastic measures. There was a time when the last resort for acne scars was dermabrasion — scraping the cheeks, chin and forehead with a mini sanding machine. It was painful, the skin would turn bright red and bleed, and ointment had to be slathered on for days. Recovery took weeks for the skin to turn from red to pink and then fade out.

Fortunately for acne scar sufferers, renowned Manhattan cosmetic dermatologist Dr. Deborah Sarnoff has devised her own spin on a spectrum of effective solutions to combat acne scars of all kinds and for all skin types.

“There are a number of new and effective treatments we

English muffin,” and they may withdraw from social events because of the way they look. Even with the best foundation and camouflage makeup, you can’t cover up indented scars on your face,” she says.

SAVING FACE WITH FRACTIONAL LASERS

“We can inject steroids into raised acne scars to make them flatter, but it is more difficult to smooth out areas of skin that are depressed or indented so the surface of the skin is more even. In these cases, our goal is to cause collagen regeneration and by far, the biggest bang for the buck is fractional laser resurfacing,” says Dr. Sarnoff. Her weapon of choice is DOT Therapy.

According to Dr. Sarnoff, DOT Therapy is a breakthrough technology in fractional ablative laser skin resurfacing that

“The new gold standard for acne scars is a single session of DOT Therapy”

can combine to remove or diminish acne scars, and the technology that is available is better than ever,” says Dr. Sarnoff. “Many people think they have acne scars but what they really have is staining of the skin that shows up as brownish, pink, or lavender discoloration.” Acne scars show up as textural changes in the skin; they can be raised (hypertrophic) or indented (atrophic). The challenge for dermatologists is that just as no two people have the same skin, no two people have the same acne scars. In fact, often there are different types of acne scars on the same face. Each situation needs to be customized,” she says.

Acne does not discriminate; it is seen in both males and females, in people with fair complexions as well as people of ethnic skin. Even people who have taken antibiotics, retinoids and other acne medications including isotretinoin (Accutane®) can be left with acne scarring, according to Dr. Sarnoff.

Acne scars can also leave an imprint on your self-esteem. “Some people can get very demoralized by acne scarring. They come into the office and say, ‘My face looks like an

can produce dramatic results on acne scars of the face, as well as the décolleté, back and shoulders. Fully ablative carbon dioxide lasers may increase the risk of permanent whitening of the skin. “Fractional lasers are generally highly effective at treating acne scars. The DOT gets its name because it treats the skin in a polka dot type of pattern, leaving areas of normal skin untouched by the laser. The real benefits are that this procedure also stimulates your skin to produce its own collagen, which can achieve great improvement in acne scars that tend to get worse with age as the skin becomes more lax,” says Dr. Sarnoff.

Her patient friendly approach offers options based on each individual’s schedule for recovery time, as well as the severity of their scarring. For example, for patients who need to get back to work or their normal routines quickly, she may recommend a series of five 20 minute non-ablative laser resurfacing sessions with Cynosure’s Affirm™ 1440 nm non-ablative laser, spaced several weeks apart. There is only minimal redness after each session, and more sessions can be performed as needed.

Dr. Sarnoff's favorite one-two punch for acne scars is her signature combination therapy. "We have found that the quickest route to looking better is a single session of non-ablative fractional resurfacing immediately followed by ablative treatment with the DOT. In other words, first treat with the Affirm™ and immediately follow with DOT Therapy. We can customize the treatment based on how much downtime the patient can accept – from four days to one week. By doing the non-ablative treatment first, it does not increase the downtime but definitely improves the result of acne scars," adds Dr. Sarnoff.

TREATING THE TOUGHEST SCARS

Perhaps the most stubborn type of tiny deep acne scar is known as the "ice pick" scar. If you stretch the surrounding skin, the scar does not disappear. Dr. Sarnoff's method for improving these pitted scars is called CROSS, an acronym for chemical reconstruction of skin scars. It works great for chicken pox scars too.

"I take a tooth pick and dip it into a potent trichloroacetic acid and push it directly into the center of a pitted scar, giving it a wound right into the middle of the scar. It sounds paradoxical to rewind a scar, but this starts the cascade of inflammation, wound healing, and wound remodeling so the scar starts to get shallower," says Dr. Sarnoff. This simple in-office procedure can be repeated at monthly intervals as needed. The area crusts for a day or two and makeup can be worn after the crust falls off.

Unlike ice pick scars, "indented" scars, known as "boxcar" scars, are the type that when you stretch the skin with your fingers around them, they improve or even disappear. These scars can be permanently treated with a classic technique called subcision. "After numbing the area with a local anesthetic, I insert a tiny needle the size of an acupuncture needle, directly under the scar, breaking up any adhesions in the deeper layers of the skin. There is some bleeding that stays under the skin, and the subdermal bleeding stimulates new collagen formation. Indented scars can be elevated so they come up to the level of the skin's surface," says Dr. Sarnoff.

FILLING AND PLUMPING

The same dermal fillers that plump up wrinkles, folds and lips can also be used to treat acne scars. Fillers such as Juvederm® XC and Restylane-L®, are injected into the dermal layer of the skin to push up depressed acne scars. The procedure is fast and painless and makeup can be worn right away. Because she only needs to use a small amount to plump up an acne scar or two, Dr. Sarnoff can use any remaining filling material in the syringe to inject fine lines or creases in your face at the same time.

As Dr. Sarnoff explains, hyaluronic acid gel fillers are a temporary fix; "The downside with using temporary dermal fillers for acne scars is that you have to repeat the injections in the same areas over time to maintain the correction." For permanent results, she prefers to use injectable liquid silicone, which is FDA approved for ophthalmic use in the U.S. "Unlike in previous decades, the liquid silicone is carefully delivered in microdroplets so it stays where we put it and this offers permanent correction."

Another of her signature techniques is Micro Botox®, which helps to diminish the appearance of enlarged pores, which are sometimes confused with acne scars. By placing tiny amounts of botulinum toxin (Botox®, Dysport™ or Xeomin®) under the skin superficially where pores tend to be larger, she can decrease the amount of oil produced. "There are tiny muscles around each hair follicle called pilar erector muscles that make the hair on your arm stand up when you have goosebumps. When we inject them subdermally, we can relax these muscles so you produce less sebum and pores look smaller," says Dr. Sarnoff.

TAMING OILY SKIN

Before suggesting acne scar treatments, Dr. Sarnoff may first treat any active acne with prescription medications or other therapies to get blemishes under control.

"It doesn't make sense to treat acne scarring if the acne is still occurring. For patients with active acne, I may also start a course of photodynamic therapy with Levulan® to dry them out. I first apply a clear, colorless solution (aminolevulinic acid) to the area and allow it to seep into the pores. After an hour, I use a specific laser to activate the Levulan®. This



Acne Scarring before treatment and six months after treatment with DOT laser therapy

ultimately shrinks the sebaceous glands, reducing skin oiliness. The skin looks less porous and scars look better."

Once acne breakouts are dealt with, Dr. Sarnoff will present her smorgasbord of reliable acne scar remedies and select the program that is best for you. Her arsenal of advanced technology combined with her many years of expertise and skin wisdom, can help you achieve the maximum results for healthy, beautiful skin. ❖

Dr. Deborah Sarnoff, Clinical Professor of Dermatology at NYU School of Medicine, is a board certified dermatologist with offices in Manhattan and Long Island. She was named one of the "Best Doctors in New York" by New York Magazine; a "Top Doctor" in America and the NY metro area by Castle Connolly Medical Ltd.; and has been featured on ABC Nightline, Dateline, The Today Show, Good Morning America, Extra, The Doctors and others. www.CosmetiqueMD.com