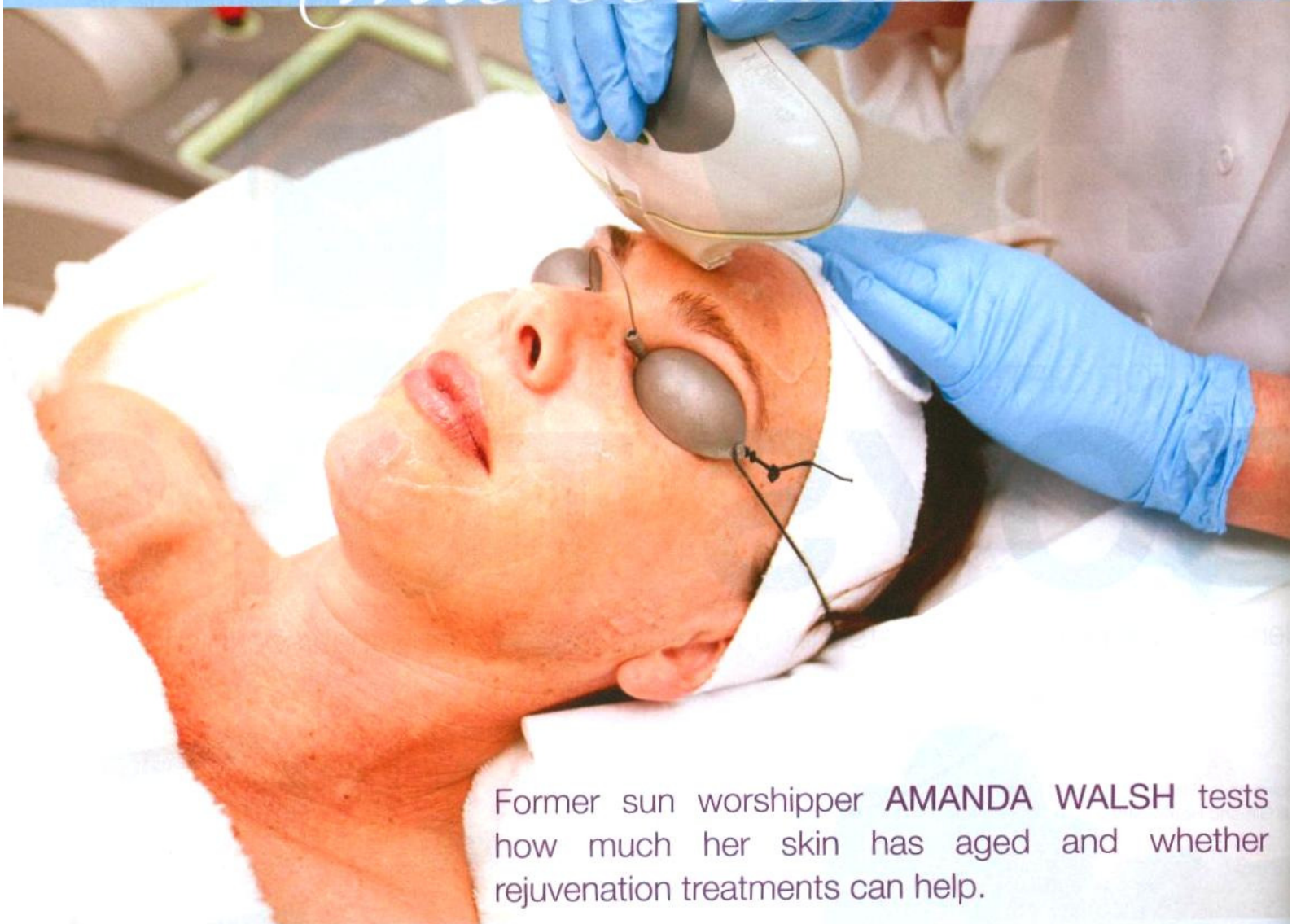


UNDER THE LIGHT

microdermabrasion



Former sun worshipper **AMANDA WALSH** tests how much her skin has aged and whether rejuvenation treatments can help.

A very wise make-up artist who had worked around the world once offered me some sage advice.

"Whatever you do always moisturise your face and neck and never go outside without sunscreen," she said. "It might not seem so important now. But when you're my age (nearly 40), you will certainly be wishing you had."

In your early 20s it's easy to cast aside such golden advice but as the challenges of bringing up children and day-to-day stresses transform into wrinkles and heaven forbid, age spots, you find yourself wishing that time could slow down.

The realisation that the aging process had taken its toll on my once youthful skin was as subtle as the Sword of Damocles. The brutal blow


was executed as I stared into the bathroom mirror, examining my many freckles before a skin appointment. There were definitely a lot more sun kisses than there used to be and a few around my jaw line were bigger, and darker than my last inspection several months before.

The deterioration of my skin was further reinforced during the beauty visit, when a specialist used the latest technology to see 2mm under my skin and track the distribution of blood and melanin that determine facial appearance.

To my horror my skin age was 10 years higher than my chronological age, indicating a high level of sun damage. Those endless days of sun worshipping had caught up with me. But at least there was no skin cancer.



microdermabrasion



"You should make sure the machines being used are medical strength and TGA approved. At Assure Medispa, medical aestheticians are laser safety officers and are accredited nationally. We also are supervised by the six surgeons of the Western Australian Plastic Surgery Centre who own and operate the premises."

It was time to become more skin conscious and take immediate steps to try to regain a more youthful appearance.

Assure Medispa's medical aesthetician Phoebe Butler suggested the best course of action was a microdermabrasion followed by IPL (Intense Pulsed Light) skin rejuvenation. With the extent of my skincare regime stretching as far as the odd slap of cleanser and moisturiser, I was very happy to be entering these uncharted waters.

People have been having microdermabrasions for years now. This non-invasive process costs about \$100 and uses crystals accelerated on to the skin's surface to wear away layers of dead and damaged skin cells. A vacuum suction whisks away the residual crystals and the unwanted abraded skin particles, leaving your skin smoother and they say, less lined.

It felt like my skin was being scrubbed with sandpaper. I guess it works like a scourer getting rid of the gunk on a saucepan. It didn't hurt, in fact I liked the sensation, probably because I knew my skin would be a lot fresher by the end of it. And it was. I was being called a little red tomato after the treatment, but within an hour the redness had disappeared and my face felt softer and cleaner.

A week later it was time to go under the light to blow these freckles and age spots into oblivion. Most IPL machines have an extensive wavelength range allowing maximum absorption of hemoglobin and melanin.

This procedure, which costs around \$500, improves skin tone and reduces surface imperfections associated with aging and photodamage.

It's important that everyone undergoes a test patch to the area being treated, 48-72 hours before treatment so appropriate settings can be worked out. It is crucial that a setting be used that is high enough to achieve the desired results but not high enough to adversely affect the surface of the skin.

"It's important to have a test patch to stop bad reactions," Phoebe says. "These include blistering and burns, hyperpigmentation (more pigment being produced) and hypopigmentation (loss of pigment). Other side effects can also include swelling and bruising and pigmentary changes which are temporary and not permanent."

The test patch worked well on my skin and two days later I turned up for the first of three to six treatments which are spaced a month apart.

microdermabrasion



At first I felt like a mosquito being zapped as each freckle and blemish was treated with the flash lamp. After about the fifth zap I started to feel a build up of heat in my face. I was more focused though on the pain. Yes, it was an uncomfortable especially on the delicate areas around the mouth and under the eyes.

I had been warned that my face would feel really hot after the treatment and cold compresses would be needed for a couple of hours to help my body get rid of the heat. It wasn't until I was on the way home that my face felt like it was severely sunburnt. At home I used a bag of frozen peas to ease the pain. It didn't seem to help terribly much and in desperation I was drawn to our outdoor pool. Despite the temperature sitting around 6C, I quickly stripped and jumped straight into the freezing water. Probably something I wouldn't recommend, however it worked a treat and about two hours later my face was back to its normal temperature.

It's probably best if you make sure you're not going to any important functions for up to two weeks after treatment. Each brown spot starts to darken like coffee granules. At one point it looked like I had Milo stuck to my face. After a few days though the spots started to flake off, leaving a more even complexion.

Even though I have only had one of the treatments I can see a significant improvement. It was worth the pain! I'm finding I'm not wearing as much make-up because I'm not having to hide my freckles or make my skin look more even. I'm told the results will last as long as the skin is protected and not exposed to further environmental damage.

There is a word of warning though when it come IPL skin rejuvenation. "It is important that you research where you decide to go for IPL treatments as machines differ as well as the training of the operators," Phoebe says. "You should make sure the machines being used are medical strength and TGA approved."



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