

# allure

THE BEAUTY EXPERT

MARCH 2003

## TINA ALSTER



### Dermatologist

Alster is the Chuck Yeager of lasers. If there is a cutting-edge procedure, Alster is its test pilot. Her patients include politicians ("I treat bipartisanship," she says), newscasters, models, lawyers—and pro bono cases, correcting scars or erasing birthmarks.

Alster estimates that she's held a laser in her hand every day of her life since 1989, "except when I've been on vacation." When Alster was still a dermatology resident at Yale University Hospital, she says lasers were "considered *Star Wars* medicine." While some of her colleagues ridiculed her, New York models hopped on Metro-North trains for her newfangled light beam. Alster recalls, "A lot of them had acne or acne scars from wearing too much makeup."

**"Ninety percent of aging is related to sun damage," Alster says.**

**"Lasers can reverse some of the prior damage."**

## The Laser Show

A laser is a "concentrated, intense beam of light that vaporizes different targets on the skin," Alster says. But while brown spots, lines, and hair can be treated in a few visits and don't even require more than a topical anesthetic, resurfacing the face is another story. Alster gives the lowdown on the \$8,000 procedure.

**Arrange a consultation with a dermatologist** If you decide to get resurfacing, clear your calendar—you'll be unfit to see anyone for two solid weeks afterward.

**The procedure requires a "twilight" anesthetic**, meaning you're not fully out, but you won't remember anything that happened. The anesthetic lasts about an hour, during which Alster uses an ablative laser to remove the epidermis and tighten the dermis.

**Alster applies a wound-healing ointment** like Aquaphor to the raw face and covers it with a formfitting plastic mask to aid healing and prevent infection.

**The healing process is painful**—and requires prescribed painkillers, constant hydration, and ice packs. Most patients check in with Alster every day for the first week. Alster says her patients "always ask me why I let them go through with it." The formfitting mask slowly loosens around the edges and peels off.

**During the second week**, the skin is bright red. The patient can go outside but should wear a thick hydrating cream, a specially formulated opaque foundation for at least a month, and a sunscreen.

**After two months, skin looks more uniform** in tone—with brown and red spots erased—and fine lines and wrinkles are reduced by at least 50 percent. "But some people have nearly full improvement," Alster says.

## Skin-Care Favorites

Alster arms herself with a laser—and she arms her patients with a proper skin-care regimen and a good SPF 25 sunscreen.



**▲ Retinol 50 EmuGel:** Apply every other night to decrease wrinkles and even out tone.



**▼ ChanTal Ethocyn Essence:** "This oil diminishes undereye wrinkles," Alster says.

**▼ Aquaphor Healing Ointment:** Alster likes this thick moisturizer for very dry skin and for patients recovering from laser resurfacing.



**▲ SkinCeuticals Vitamin-C Firming Cream:** "It contains ascorbic acid, the only form of vitamin C proven to lighten dark spots and diminish wrinkles. Use it at night."

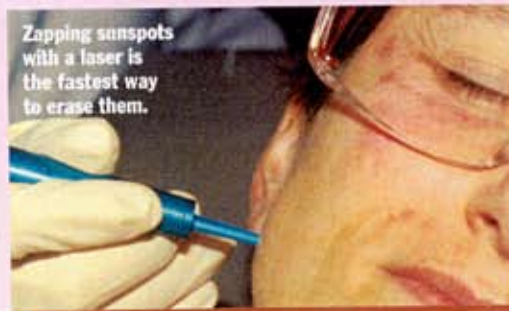


**▲ MD Forté Facial Cream with Glycolic Acid:** For combating wrinkles. "The glycolic acid increases cell turnover and helps slough off brown spots. Alternate it with a retinoid product."

## Complexion Rx

**Laser surgery is not a face-lift** "A face-lift will help jowliness, but it won't help the wrinkles," Alster says. A laser minimizes scars, red spots, brown spots, hair, tattoos, and fine lines caused by the sun.

**Be a patient patient** Conditions such as sun spots or spider veins can clear up in one or two visits, while smoothing a wrinkle with a nonablative laser (one that doesn't remove the entire outermost layer of skin) usually requires three visits. And tattoos can take a dozen trips—and even many years—to fade.



Zapping sunspots with a laser is the fastest way to erase them.