

WASHINGTONIAN

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BY SHERRI DALPHONSE
AND LESLIE MILK

HOW TO LOOK YOUNGER AND BETTER, AND HOW TO STAY THAT WAY: HERE'S A 28-PAGE GUIDE TO TREATING EVERYTHING FROM WRINKLES TO CELLULITE

Skin

DO YOU LOVE THE SKIN YOU'RE IN? Or when you look in the mirror do you see lines, bumps, blemishes, liver spots, or crow's-feet? Skin is a hot topic. Maureen Dowd devoted an entire *New York Times* column to wrinkles. Men, too, are concerned with healthy, youthful skin.

Dr. Tina Alster, the DC dermatologist whom Dowd called "the Laser Queen" in her column, was at an embassy dinner and found herself seated with CNN's Wolf Blitzer, WUSA-TV anchor Gordon Peterson, and Bob Greenberger of the *Wall Street Journal*. Alster was set to talk about international issues, but the media men would have none of it. They wanted her advice on erasing crow's-feet.

Lasers: Feel the Burn

IN LASERBRASION, A BEAM OF light burns away layers of skin and, along with those layers, wrinkles, age spots, birthmarks, scars, tattoos, and more.

Erbium YAG lasers emit a longer, less intense beam that works well on younger patients with finer surface wrinkles. Erbium lasers don't build up heat, so there is less redness and a shorter healing process. Carbon-dioxide lasers send more intense pulses of light to burn away deeper lines and creases like the labial folds between nose and mouth.

Physicians have more control with lasers than they do with chemicals. And lasers, especially CO₂ lasers, do something else chemical peels do not: tighten underlying collagen.

When used on the forehead or around the eyes, says Washington laser surgeon Tina Alster, laserabrasion creates the effect of a brow or upper-eye lift.

Side Effects: Patients who have CO₂ resurfacing for deep wrinkles should expect to be out of commission for about ten days with swelling, oozing, redness, and crustiness. A sunburn-like redness can last for a few months but can be covered with makeup.

There's a feeling among some physicians that lasers are becoming overused. Any doctor or dentist can rent a laser, as no training is required by law.

Both Alster and Adrian train other physicians in laser resurfacing and are called upon to treat patients with scars, burns, and other complications from botched laser surgery.

"These cannot be totally fixed," Alster warns.

Cost: A full-face laser resurfacing costs \$2,500 to \$8,000, including anesthesia and follow-up visits. Treating the eye area alone, a popular option, costs \$800 to \$2,000.

