



Following the Light

Spas across the spectrum are harnessing the power of light to deliver radiant results.

By Inga Hansen

We are creatures of the sun. We step out of the shadows and gravitate toward the light. Our instincts are increasingly supported by scientific data that credit the use of light with improving our physical and mental health. In recent years, we've seen an explosion in light-based technologies that promise to heal and rejuvenate.

One of the fastest growing categories in skin care is light-emitting diodes (LEDs). They feature specific wavelengths to target individual client concerns. Documented results from a natural, noninvasive treatment are making LEDs a popular choice in holistic skin care and medical aesthetics facilities.

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[Following the Light]



The healing properties of red, near-infrared and amber wavelengths are well documented.

Healing Rays

The wavelengths most widely used in skin care fall between 600-900 nanometers (nm) in the red, near-infrared and amber portion of the light spectrum. Used by NASA and the medical community, these wavelengths are known for their healing properties and ability to stimulate the skin at the cellular level. LED devices may be stand-alone units with square panels or handheld devices such as the Rejuvalight II from Cosmpro.

Amber, red and near-infrared LED treatments are finding a place on spa menus as stand-alone antiaging treatments and as adjuncts to peels and microdermabrasion. "A lot of people feel a little irritated or wind burnt the day after a chemical peel or microdermabrasion," says Marilyn

LED treatments are finding a place on spa menus as stand-alone antiaging treatments and as adjuncts to resurfacing.

Roundy, owner, JM&R Spa in Tooele, Utah. "We can alleviate that discomfort with a red-light LED treatment to heal and repair the skin." Roundy is so impressed with its calming effects she has added LED treatments to her waxing services to soothe inflammation.

At Veronica Skin Care and Medical Spa (veronica.skincare.com), owner Veronica Barton-Schwartz relies on red LEDs to speed healing in her skincare

and medical aesthetics practices. "We always put clients under the red light immediately following peels. We also use it following Botox injections to reduce bruising and after Fraxel laser services to speed healing," she says. "In some cases, we use the red light 10 minutes before a laser service and again 10 minutes after the treatment to reduce the inflammatory period."

Chanel Jenae, vice president, Arcona (arcona.com), agrees. "Red-light therapy is especially beneficial to clients undergoing more invasive dermatological procedures," she says. "It speeds the body's natural healing processes. It also minimizes fine lines and wrinkles, and loss of elasticity."

When used to address the signs of aging, LED treatments must be done as a series because the effects are gradual. But with no downtime or discomfort, they're a popular choice for clients and skincare professionals who believe in taking a progressive but unaggressive approach to improving skin condition.

Gentle Rejuvenation

Sandra Curtis, owner, Oasis Day Spa (oasisdayspanyc.com), equates the process of LED treat-

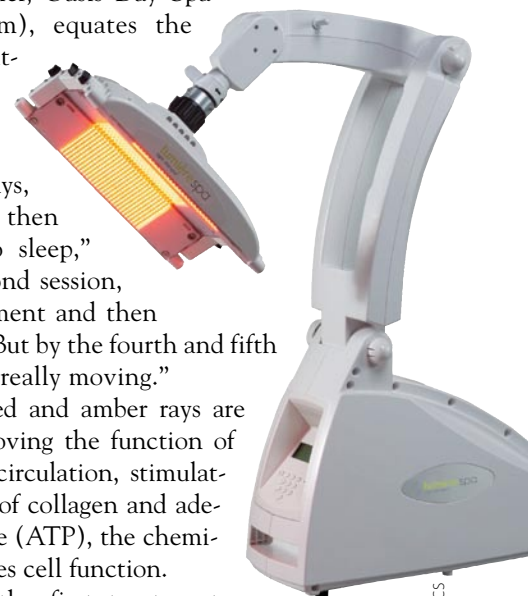
ments on the skin with trying to wake a teenager.

"The first time it says, 'yeah, yeah,' and then goes right back to sleep," she says. "The second session, it sits up for a moment and then goes back to sleep. But by the fourth and fifth sessions, things are really moving."

Red, near-infrared and amber rays are credited with improving the function of skin by increasing circulation, stimulating the production of collagen and adenosine tri-phosphate (ATP), the chemical energy that drives cell function.

"Starting with the first treatment, clients feel an improvement in skin texture," says Jennifer Schoen, owner, 21st Century Skincare (21st-century.skincare.com). "After the second and third session, pore size is improved, and from the fourth treatment on, I see a reduction in excess

continued on page 78 ▶



PhotoTherapeutics' Lumiere can be used for a variety of treatments.

PHOTOS COURTESY PHOTO THERAPEUTICS

oil and a plumping of the skin.”

Schoen, who chose to introduce LED based on the results she experienced with her own sun damaged skin, is careful not to promote the service as a “fountain of youth.” “The changes are subtle and become more dramatic only if they’re continued over the course of a few months,” she says. “Over time, it improves skin tone and texture, and reduces dark circles and undereye puffiness.”

Pamela Bond, esthetician and owner, Pamela Bond Skin Fitness (pamelabond.com) appreciates the effect LED therapy has on her clients’ fine lines, especially those around the lips. “The results aren’t as dramatic as with a filler,” she says. “But you do see a reduction in fine lines as the skin plumps and tightens, and the results are phenomenal for lip lines on aged skin.”

LED treatments are offered in a series. The number is dependent on skin condition and the equipment used. Schoen uses the Quasar Pro (quasarp.com) SP in a series of six to 12 weekly treatments. “For maintenance, I recommend coming in every six weeks,” she says.

Margaret Lora, spa director, Ajune (ajune.com), offers the GentleWaves (lightbioscience.com) amber light system. She recommends a series

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of 10 to 12 treatments for her clients. “We’ve also integrated LED into every clinical facial we offer, and our clinical manicures and pedicures,” Lora says. “It reduces redness on the legs and signs of aging on the hands.”

The Power of Blue

The color blue is most often associated with water and calming, but blue light is known for its ability to destroy. The 400nm blue wavelength attacks *Propionibacterium acnes* (*P. acnes*), making blue LED a popular and effective addition to acne facials and treatment plans.

“I use blue light in conjunction with topicals for my acne clients, and they see impressive results,” Barton-Schwartz says. “These services are popular

Cycling Light

The defining feature of LED is its use of one single wavelength to address specific concerns. But with a growing variety of beneficial wavelengths, spas are finding that layering LED treatments offers optimal



results. In response, new systems are offering multiple LEDs that are applied in cycles to the skin. Dermavista (dermavista.com) offers the Cold Light Full Face LED Mask. The system includes red, amber, green and blue light.

Ariel Starr, owner, Salon Du Soleux Medi-Spa in Davis Island and Redington Beach, Florida, works with the Silhouet-Tone (silhouet-tone.com) Soli-Tone 400, which offers four cell-specific wavelengths. The unit was recently updated to the Soli-Tone 2500 (shown above).

“The red light penetrates the farthest to stimulate collagen; the yellow light is the second deepest wavelength. It reduces redness like the red lights and also offers lymphatic drainage,” Starr says. “The green light affects the basal layer to address pigmentation concerns, while the blue light creates oxygenation and kills *P. acnes*.”

The different wavelengths run at five-minute intervals. “The light improves skin texture and also provides a lift for skin toning,” Starr says. “And these treatments can be performed anywhere on the body, not just the face.”

with clients who don’t want to take oral medications to treat their acne.”

Many are ramping up results by combining the deeper penetrating red light with the *P. acnes*-attacking blue light. This combination is getting a lot of attention based on recent research that supports the efficacy of red light not only to calm inflammation but also to reduce oil production.

In “Combination Blue and Red LED Phototherapy in the Treatment of Mild to Severe Acne Vulgaris,” (*Journal of Cosmetic Laser Therapy*, June 2006), subjects received eight 20-minute sessions with LED. The treatments were performed twice a week and alternated between 415nm blue and

Energy Balancing Light

Long before lasers and LEDs isolated specific wavelengths to target skin concerns, the art of ayurveda recognized the power of light on moods and physical health. Practitioners such as Dawn Tardif, owner, BodiScience (bodiscience.com), embrace broad-spectrum light to stimulate acupuncture points for pain management, mood disorders and Chakra balancing.

"We use the Chromopuncteur from Phytobiodermie to balance the Chakras in our ayurvedic treatments," Tardif says. "In our traditional face and body treatments, we're using the Chromopuncteur on acupuncture meridians to reduce stress and address concerns from acne to depression. In these services, where the light is applied is just as important as the color used."

Rather than narrow wavelengths, the art of Chromotherapy supports the use of broad-spectrum light to offer consistent results for all clients. "Energy imbalances differ from person to person," Tardif says. "If we isolate just one nanometer of light, it's not going to impact every client. So we utilize a broad spectrum. With red light, for example, one client's skin may get excited over the 527nm wavelength but another will respond to 540nm. The Chromopuncteur allows us to isolate certain colors to address specific concerns, but we would apply the entire red spectrum or purple spectrum depending on what we're trying to achieve."



633nm red. On average, patients' acne lesions showed improvement by 46% at four weeks and 81% at 12 weeks.

JM&R Spa's Roundy works with the Synergie by Dynatroncs (dynatroncs.com) Light Therapy system, which includes red and blue LED. "The blue treatment head has some red light in it, so I don't have to go back over the face with the separate red LED," she says. If you're using a machine that offers blue and red treatment heads, you would use the blue first to kill the *P. acnes* and then follow with red to reduce oil and calm inflammation.

"Even with red light alone, we see improvement in breakouts," says Schoen, who spaces her acne LED treatments one week to 10 days apart with a minimum of six sessions. "But for cystic or inflammatory acne, the combination of blue and red light works like a charm."

"When I introduced the system, I was surprised by how many clients choose to have their teeth whitened at a spa."

One of the latest indications for blue light is in the arena of teeth whitening. Blue LEDs are used to activate a lightening gel to remove stains from tooth enamel in one one-hour session. Oasis' Curtis offers her clients the BriteWhite system, created by BEKS Incorporated (britewhitesystem.com), a manufacturer of aesthetic LED systems. "When I introduced the system, I was surprised by how many clients choose to have their teeth whitened at a spa versus a dentist's office," Curtis says. "A lot of people are dental phobic. They prefer to have this done in a relaxing setting where no one's going to criticize their flossing techniques."

Getting Started

Bond at Pamela Bond Skin Fitness investigated several LED machines before settling on the GentleWaves (lightbioscience.com). She visited local dermatologists' offices to try out their LED systems, and when she found the one that worked on her own skin, she made the investment.

Intense Pulsed Light

Reserved for medical professionals in the healthcare or medical aesthetics arena, intense pulsed light (IPL) systems provide a more aggressive use of light. Unlike LEDs and lasers that utilize one particular wavelength, IPLs offer a variety of wavelengths delivered in short pulses. The Cynosure (cynosure.com) PL system (shown below), for instance, includes wavelengths from 560-950 nanometers to address sun damage, pigmented lesions and rosacea.

The Europro Record 618 offers wavelengths of 420-1100nm and is indicated for hair removal, vascular treatment and antiaging. "IPLs are fantastic for addressing uneven skin tone," says Michele Yacso, physician's assistant at Blue (bluespa.com). "They're effective for fine lines and textural changes associated with sun damage because you're using a variety of wavelengths that penetrate the skin from the superficial to moderate depths."

Yacso offers IPL services in packages of four to five, spaced three to five weeks apart. "For years, plastic surgeons have been using IPLs prior to skin grafts because of their ability to stimulate collagenesis," Yacso says. "This is in addition to their positive effect on pigmentation." IPL treatments are generally limited to clients with medium skin type IV or lower due to pigmentation concerns in darker skin types.



Veronica Skin Care's Barton-Schwartz works with the Omnilux and Lumiere from Photo Therapeutics (phototherapeutics.com). With 30 years in the industry, she was introduced to LED in its early stages. "The theory made sense to me, but I wasn't seeing results with some of the early equipment, so I waited but kept looking," she says. "When I was introduced to the Omnilux and Lumiere, I saw a difference in my skin and decided to bring them in."

Roundy introduced her LED system by incor-



Silhouet-Tone offers a two-day training program to help you get started with its light-based devices.

porating it into microdermabrasion services. "I'd do the light on half the face following microdermabrasion and ask the client if she could feel a difference," Roundy says. "Every time, the client would ask me to do the whole face, and at the next visit she'd say, 'You're going to do the light, right?'" The demonstration also encouraged clients to book stand-alone light treatments from the menu.

The two-day, in-spa training provided by Silhouet-Tone (silhouettone.com) helped Ariel Starr, owner, Salon Du Soleux Medi-Spa in Davis Island and Redington Beach, Florida, build a loyal following for her photofacials. "I had 16 of my best clients lined up to try a free light treatment during my training period," Starr says. "Their word-of-mouth advertising helped launch the services. I also added LED to the end of my microdermabrasion treatments."

Curtis did a little market research among her clients before introducing the BriteWhite teeth whitening LED system. "I talked to several of my clients about the system, and the response was positive," she says. "I also posted information about the service on my website and sent out a discount offer through my newsletter. From there, it was all word of mouth." ●

Inga Hansen is a Los Angeles-based freelance writer. Email her at ihansen@socal.rr.com.