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# Blended BENEFITS

*Why are they so appealing to clients?*

**DESPITE ONGOING EFFORTS BY SKIN CARE** professionals, chemical peels still face a stiff public relations challenge. The name itself evokes thoughts of an unpleasant treatment that leaves behind redness and causes discomfort. Fortunately, in reality there are a multitude of blended peel options available today. These peels are not only gentle, they also effectively treat multiple skin conditions simultaneously.

It is important to understand the different acid categories and their benefits. The chemical peel stigma can be erased by using the correct blended peel formula on clients along with a healthy dose of education.

## The science and history

The primary goal of chemical peeling is to regulate and enhance the cellular turnover process and remove dead cells from the surface of the skin. The use of exfoliating acids in treatments is one of the most dependable and safest procedures to improve overall skin health and appearance.

This method dates back thousands of years and has evolved into a category with many diverse

options for treatment. Single acid peels such as phenol were first used in the late 1920s. These peels were deep and aggressive, only suitable for a small patient demographic. In 1941 the first peel blend was documented in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* by a group of physicians (Wolff, Eller, Urkow and Combes). Today, this solution is known as the Jessner's solution, as it was popularized in the 1950s by Max Jessner, M.D. From that point on, a variety of acids have been blended together to address specific skin types. Support ingredients were added to these blends to treat various skin disorders, such as discoloration and acne or to reinforce an anti-aging regimen.

## Main acid categories used in blends

The most commonly used acids in blended solutions today are trichloroacetic acid (TCA), alpha hydroxy acid (AHA) and beta hydroxy acid (BHA). These acids can be used as a single acid peel, but when applied as part of a blended solution they can treat a larger range of skin conditions.

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BY ALISON ADAMS-WOODFORD

A client with mature dry skin would see excellent results from a peel containing TCA, lactic acid and skin brightening ingredients.

### Trichloroacetic acid

TCA is synthetically produced by a reaction between acetic acid and chlorine. It is a keratococagulant that was first researched in the 1900s. TCA became more popular than stronger acids, such as phenol, due to its predictability and safety profile. TCA is typically used in percentages ranging from 6 to 30, but solutions containing more than 10 percent should be reserved for more resilient, lighter-skinned clients, due to an increased risk of scarring and hyperpigmentation. TCA is an excellent choice for correcting surface texture, reducing hyperpigmentation, scarring and wrinkling. It works well in blended formulations because it does not have to be neutralized.

### Alpha hydroxy acids

AHAs are made up of hydrophilic carboxylic acids that have similar functions. The acids all work together to release the desmosomal bonds between keratinocytes. This allows for better exfoliation and increases cell turnover. They also stimulate fibroblasts in the skin that help retain collagen and elastin. This leads to firmer, smoother skin post-peel.



In addition to their common functions, each AHA has specific ancillary benefits that make them appropriate for a variety of different skin types and conditions. The family of AHAs is comprised of glycolic, citric, lactic, malic, tartaric and mandelic acids. However, the first three are by far the most popular. They can be used alone or in blends.

### GLYCOLIC ACID

Glycolic acid is a small molecule that penetrates quickly into the skin, therefore increasing the potential for irritation or inflammation. This AHA is best for oilier skin types, as it tends to be too drying for aging skin and too irritating for sensitive skin.

### CITRIC ACID

Citric acid has been proven to thicken the epidermis and increase the hyaluronic acid content of the skin. This helps the skin hold moisture more effectively, making it an excellent choice for aging skin and for evening out discoloration.

### LACTIC ACID

Lactic acid is a larger molecule and penetrates the skin more slowly. This reduces the chance of developing irritation. It also helps remove unwanted pigment and hydrates the skin. Lactic acid is a component of the skin's natural moisturizing factors, which are ingredients that mimic the structure and function of healthy skin.

Used as single acid peels, AHAs have the potential to sink into the upper layers of the epidermis, causing discomfort and burns. For this reason, they must be neutralized with a base solution or water. However, using AHAs as part of a blended solution removes the need for neutralization.

### Beta hydroxy acid (BHA)

The BHA category currently only has salicylic acid. This lipophilic acid has the ability to penetrate deeply into oil-clogged pores, making it a great choice for acne patients. It also has anti-inflammatory benefits, promoting acne relief. It is a great choice for sensitive skin, rosacea, uneven surface texture, hyperpigmentation and sun-damaged skin. Although highly effective when used alone, salicylic acid has proven to be very beneficial when used in a blend as well. It is one of the key ingredients in the Jessner's solution.

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An acne patient would benefit from a salicylic and lactic acid blended peel with melanogenesis inhibitors to fight off potential post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation left behind due to acne lesions.

### Advantages of blends

While each of the above acids has proven to be effective when used alone, incorporating them into blends makes it possible to use each acid at a lower percentage. This minimizes client discomfort and downtime. Choosing blended peel formulations also increases the number of potential skin benefits due to the use of multiple exfoliating ingredients.

Look for blends that specifically target the unique skin challenges of each patient. A client with mature dry skin would see excellent results from a peel containing TCA, lactic acid and skin brightening ingredients. An acne patient would benefit from a salicylic and lactic acid blended peel with melanogenesis inhibitors

to fight off potential post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation left behind due to acne lesions.

When choosing daily care products for guests, always look for well-rounded formulations that address multiple skin challenges simultaneously. Using blends allows estheticians to treat a wider variety of guests and deliver predictable yet dramatic results. Explore the options available. These advanced blends help clients see for themselves that chemical peels are safe, effective and beneficial for the skin. ■

#### Alison Adams-Woodford

is a licensed esthetician and the senior editorial strategist for PCA Skin®, where she previously held the roles of director of education and director of product development. Adams-Woodford has worked with physicians, licensed skin health professionals and chemists, striving to provide the best in education and products to support skin health and improve people's lives.



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