



intimate area
DISCOLORATION

BY KELLY FULTON-KENDRICK

Services and treatments

THE TREND TO LIGHTEN INTIMATE AREAS IS BECOMING ever more popular and mainstream. The desire for even-toned genitalia started in the adult entertainment industry, and became more prevalent when Brazilian waxing uncovered areas that were darker than the rest of the body.

It is in fact normal for the area around the anus and vagina to be darker. Genetics dictate how dark that area is, but aggravating factors such as hormones, pregnancy and trauma (waxing) can darken it further. These spots can be successfully lightened with a combination of professional treatments and guest compliance with home care recommendations.

Professionals like Enrique Ramirez, the owner, member and spa service practitioner at face to face nyc, a day spa in New York City, added intimate bleaching to his menu after learning about it through the media.

“We started offering this service in 2007 after an episode of a now defunct TV show that was filmed in California,” he says. “We figured it was something new, unique and excellent for marketing purposes to give our brand much needed publicity. To my surprise, after our article in *Time Out New York* and *The Howard Stern Show*, intimate bleaching became all the rage in New York City.”

Other spa owners, like Rosanna Zayas of Rosanna Zayas Esthetic Center in Roslindale, MA began offering the service after a client requested it. “One day a client requested that treatment and I did it,” she says. “It worked perfectly.”

At Skin Specialists Spa in Coral Gables, FL, intimate area discoloration is treated very effectively with a combination of at-home bleaching products and professional peels. During the initial client consultation, we discuss the client’s goals and expectations.

“Don’t expect any fast changes with only one or two treatments, as hyperpigmentation is one of the toughest skin conditions to reverse,” Ramirez explains in regard to managing client expectations. “Most women sign up for a series of six treatments.”

If the client indicates a history of diabetes, lupus, psoriasis, herpes or genital warts, we inform them that we cannot perform the service, since the peel will aggravate these conditions.

We then explain the process to the client before doing the physical examination of the area. Specifically, we review the skin history form with the client. If the client indicates a history of diabetes, lupus, psoriasis, herpes or genital warts, we inform them that we cannot perform the service, since the peel will aggravate these conditions. In addition, if the client has had recent procedures (surgical or non-surgical) performed in the area to be treated, those areas need to be completely healed prior to the peel. Finally, it is very important to review the client’s ethnic origin. Although a client appears to be a Fitzpatrick 2, they might have a grandparent that is a Fitzpatrick 4. This will show up as reactive hyperpigmentation if the client is not preconditioned for long enough.

After the consultation, we ask the client to change into disposable underwear for the skin evaluation. The objective during the skin evaluation is to determine the Fitzpatrick skin type, tone of the discoloration (see pigmentation scale) and identify any signs of irritation that need to be healed before the peel. Wearing latex-free gloves, we evaluate the areas of concern. When you evaluate the labia majora and the inner thighs, your client should be lying flat on a bed, her leg in a bent position with her foot facing in. To evaluate the anus, perineum, inner buttocks and intergluteal cleft, have the client lie flat on their back and raise the knees to the chest and turn the soles of the feet in together. Or have them kneel with their forearms resting on the table.

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FITZPATRICK SKIN TYPE	LENGTH OF PRECONDITIONING
Type I (very white or freckled)	1 - 2 weeks
Type II (white)	2 - 3 weeks
Type III (white to olive) & Type IV (brown)	4 - 6 weeks
Type V (dark brown) & Type V (black)	6 - 12 weeks

We instruct the client to apply the at-home product to the affected area every other day to reduce irritation, and once the skin acclimates, to apply it daily.

Based on the skin evaluation, we put the client on a preconditioning regimen for a period of time, taking into account their Fitzpatrick skin type and ethnic origin (see chart on page 31). For the best results, all Fitzpatrick skin types must precondition the area to be treated. Recommended ingredients for preconditioning include alpha-arbutin, azelaic acid, emblica extract, kojic acid, lactic acid, licorice root extract, mandelic acid, mulberry root extract and/or vitamin A. We instruct the client to apply the at-home product to the affected area every other day to reduce irritation, and once the skin acclimates, to apply it daily.

We schedule the peel for a date when the client is not menstruating. We instruct them not to shave or wax in the three days before the peel, and not to suntan, get sunburned or otherwise irritate the area for a week before the peel. The client is asked to clean the area with a gentle antibacterial cleanser, such as a mandelic wash, before arriving for their appointment. They are told to arrive sans underwear, wearing a loose-fitting skirt or yoga style pants.

Upon their arrival at our office, we bring the client to the treatment room, where soft music is playing and a lightly scented candle is lit. We give the client the informed consent form, a bottle of water and disposable underwear. Prior to starting the treatment, we encourage the client to ask any questions they may have, and double check to ensure that the consent form is signed.

At our peel station, we have a mandelic toner. This is a two-step, medium depth peel solution consisting of lactic, salicylic and trichloroacetic acid, 4" x 4" gauzes, a bottle of water, eye wash, latex-free gloves and a seven-inch fan.

To peel the labia majora and the inner thighs, your client should be lying flat on a bed with her leg in a bent position and her foot facing in. Fold the 4" x 4" gauze twice, and wet the gauze with the mandelic toner so that it is damp, not dripping. Start with the labia majora or outer lips. It is important to note that you are not peeling the labia minora or inner lips. The disposable underwear will act to cover the labia minora. Start at the bottom of the outer lip and gently swipe upward, as if you are cleaning a baby's bottom. Then swipe the other outer lip.

Next, move onto the inner thighs. Use the flat of the hand to stretch the skin and the other hand to swipe firmly out toward the outer thigh, then inward toward the inner thigh, making

sure to overlap. Next, using the same stroke techniques, we apply between one and three coats of the first bottle of the two-step peel. The number of coats applied is dependent on how the client is feeling. Using a scale of one (no pain) to 10 (very painful), gauge the comfort level of the client.

If the client is at a seven without the fan, but a two with the fan, then apply three coats. If the client is at a seven with the fan on, apply one or two coats. Do not apply the next coat. Often we let the client rest with the fan for a few moments before proceeding. We then apply one to three coats of the second bottle of the two-step peel. Again, we ask how the client is feeling. After the last coat, the client remains on their back or side for 10 minutes with the fan blowing on the area treated.

Once the client sits up, they should drink a bottle of water and get dressed in loose fitting clothing. We send the client home with a mild cleanser, an aloe based ointment and a sunscreen since that area is exposed to sun rays while sitting in a car and reflective rays while walking. The client is instructed not to rinse the area for at least six hours. It is also fine for them to go to sleep without underwear and wash it the next day. They are not to have sex or swim for three days. If itching occurs that the aloe ointment does not relieve, the client can calm the area with cold compresses. Between days three and five, the client's skin will flake. Instruct them not to pick or pull at the flakes. If there are no issues, then the client can return in two to three weeks for a follow-up visit. If there is excessive irritation, then the client can come back in one to two days. We have never had any problems with this treatment beyond normal irritation.

Can this service add value to your business? At a recent training, some attendees assumed their clients would never be interested in intimate bleaching. To their surprise, when they actually mentioned it to their clients, many indicated that they wanted it right away.

"Brazilian bleaching has added a great value to my business," says Zayas. "My clients are satisfied with the work and they love it. They come back for more."

"Intimate bleaching has much value," Ramirez concludes. "We charge \$100 for a three-minute peeling treatment. It doesn't get any better for our bank account, and women are left happy and satisfied ... more than what any man can do for them!" ■

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