

GET YOUR BEST BODY

health

Ray of Hope

More and more New Yorkers are opting for photofacials, a new dermatology treatment that uses a rainbow of flashing lights to erase skin problems.

A few weeks ago, on the day of the Royalton Hotel's opening bash, dermatologist **Dr. David Colbert's** office looked more like Frédéric Fekkai's salon than a physician's waiting room.

A group of socialites clutched BlackBerryes as they waited for their turns to undergo the beauty treatment of the moment, light therapy. "I have this string of young girls with their \$4,000 bags," sighs Dr. Colbert. "They come in every time they have an event. It's like a chain reaction, where they all text each other to coordinate appointments. Word gets out there's a new facial that makes you glow for 78 hours and all the actors are doing it...so all these beautiful socialites with a lot of money have to do it, too."

Light treatments have been around for more than a decade—but while they were previously used to reduce blemishes, today's higher-powered equipment means they can now be used for "photofacials" that firm skin and reduce hyperpigmentation. There's Intense Pulsed Light (IPL), a strong light source applied directly to the skin, which flashes with the push of a button; and milder Light-Emitting Diodes (LEDs), for which a patient sits in front of a panel of lights (think tanning booth). Yellow light targets brown spots, red light decreases inflammation, green light hits broken capillaries, and blue light kills bacteria that cause breakouts.

Ellen Tirecido, a 40-year-old exec for a clothing manufacturer, goes to Completely Bare for photofacials every two weeks. "I'm a complete addict," she admits. She gets the Age Eraser—a panel of lights, alternately

flashing green, red, yellow and blue, hovers over her face, while she listens to music. "It makes me feel 10 years younger," she says. "I'm going to an event next week and my ex is going to be there. Believe me, I'm getting a light treatment the night before."

"Light therapy is becoming the most widespread rejuvenation method other than Botox and fillers," says Park Avenue dermatologist Dr. Neil Sadick. "Patients actually enjoy coming in for 20-minute sessions. It's relaxing, like sitting under a sunlamp."

But it doesn't come cheap. At Completely Bare, the initial, 75-minute Age Eraser treatment costs \$250, and half-hour follow-ups are \$175. Dr. Sadick charges \$125 per session for LEDs, which require about 8 to 10 sessions, and \$750 for the stronger IPLs, which can require as few as 6 visits (purchase 5 and you get the 6th session free). Dr. Colbert's 30-minute sessions, which start with microdermabrasion and are followed by an IPL, cost \$600 a visit.

"It gives you glamour the day you do it," Dr. Colbert maintains. "It pumps up your collagen and elastin, brings water to the face and gives you a big blast of blood flow." Plus, he says, the treatment makes people photograph better. "Dark areas soak up light, and when you get rid of them, the light reflects better off your skin. It's like a halo effect." He says that TV and film actors regularly come in for the treatments, and two Oscar nominees popped in for touch-ups two days before the 2007 awards ceremony.

Dara Tomanovich, who's in her mid-30s and models for beauty companies such as Oil of Olay, wouldn't dream of doing a campaign without first having a photofacial. "I used to get classic facials that took over

an hour, and I never came out looking as refreshed," she says. "Now it takes 20 minutes and there's no redness afterward."

Men, too, are hitting the bright lights. Michael Halsband, a photographer and surfer in his mid-40s, tried having his sun-induced freckles sliced off by a dermatologist. "You can play that game forever. I was getting scars all over," he recalls. Then he visited Manhattan plastic surgeon Larry Reed, and watched as his brown spots literally crumbled away. "I went for several rounds of the IPL. I did my entire body. The light just

"I went for several rounds of the IPL. The light fries everything that's bad and turns it to dust."

fries everything that's bad and turns it to dust." The only drawback—the spots will reappear if you are exposed to the sun. As a result, Michael stayed home with his shades drawn for two weeks after his IPL sessions.

Even 82-year-old Corrine Reid is finding that treatments are warding off years. She swears that her series of 45-second, \$80 LED sessions at Shizuka New York Day Spa have done what no other treatment could. "I smoked for 40 years, so I had wrinkles around my mouth," she says. "I tried microdermabrasion, but it turned my skin purple. I had eight treatments with the light, two weeks apart, and the wrinkles disappeared. I might get older. But with this miracle cure, I'm not going to age." —Beth Landman