

A woman with her hair in an updo, wearing a white strapless wedding dress, stands in profile by a large window. The room is bright and airy, with a yellow chair and a green plant visible in the background.

# Once in a Lifetime

Working with special event patients requires some special considerations.

**E**very little girl dreams of her wedding day—the groom, the dress, the flowers and, of course, the pictures that will last a lifetime. In an industry that serves a predominantly female patient base and often caters to those who spend time in front of the camera, you will likely receive requests from patients preparing for weddings, red carpet events, beauty pageants and other special occasions. While the desires of these patients are the same as others—beautiful skin tone and texture, picture-perfect symmetry, a smoothing of lines and wrinkles—the time frame available for treatment is often shortened. Achieving the best results with no worrying side effects to add to an already stressful moment requires some pre-planning between you and your patient.

By Inga Hansen

## Once in a Lifetime

### Four Weeks to Red Carpet Ready

"A special event patient wants to look refreshed but not different, so you do need to leave enough time to address any complications," warns Matthew Schulman, MD, assistant professor of plastic surgery at The Mount Sinai School of Medicine, ([drschulmanplasticsurgery.com](http://drschulmanplasticsurgery.com)). He recommends a four-week skin rejuvenation plan to help patients boost their appearance safely and relatively quickly.

**Four weeks out.** "My classic four-week plan starts at four weeks out with microdermabrasion," says Dr. Schulman. The gentle resurfacing brightens skin and stimulates collagen. By starting at four weeks out, the patient can get in a course of six microdermabrasion treatments prior to picture time.

**Three weeks out.** At three weeks, the patient receives dermal fillers for the nasolabial folds, marionette lines and any other problem areas with deep lines. "It can take a week or two for the product to settle in," says Dr. Schulman. "This also gives the bruising time to resolve."

**Two weeks out.** At two weeks, "We look at neurotoxins—Botox or Dysport," says Dr. Schulman. "It takes anywhere

from a few days to a week for the neurotoxins to take effect. Two weeks gives you time to correct any unevenness and do touchups. The nice thing about Dysport is that it takes effect in only two days versus Botox, which takes about five days."

S. Saul Lahijani, MD, Beverly Hills Institute of Plastic Surgery ([saulmd.com](http://saulmd.com)), follows a similar timetable with his patients. "For Botox and fillers,



*"No one wants to give a patient ptosis or make her asymmetrical, but these complications can happen."*

I want to see the patient at least two to three weeks before the event," he says. "No one wants to give a patient ptosis or make her asymmetrical, but these complications can happen. I encourage patients to leave enough time for a one-week follow-up to assess results and do touchups."

**One week out.** One week before the event, Dr. Schulman offers a light chemical peel—either an AHA or glycolic. "This brightens the skin and gives it a nice glow. It also clears blemishes," he says.

Titan ([cutera.com](http://cutera.com)) requires several treatments over several months to achieve the desired results," says Dr. Gold. He notes that even with single-session devices—such as the Ulthera ultrasound device ([ulthera.com](http://ulthera.com))—it can take up to three months to see the final results.

"To get good skin tightening, patients need to undergo a long, multi-month course of treatments," agrees Dr. Schulman, "but there is an immediate, short-term tightening effect that occurs with the radiofrequency devices. So, some patients come in three days before their event for RF skin tightening, especially in the neck, chin and jowls."

Fractional lasers devices—both ablative and nonablative—also require several months to achieve optimal results, so patients must plan well in advance to take advantage of these technologies.

"I like the fractional RF resurfacing from Syneron (eMatrix, [syneron.com](http://syneron.com))," says Dr. Lahijani. "It's a fractional delivery so it does require two to three treatments planned a few months in advance for really impressive results, but I can treat any skin type."

### Incorporating Aesthetic Devices

Patients seeking more substantial benefits than those achieved with microdermabrasion and light peels have a variety of options before them, including deeper peels and energy-based devices, whether laser, light, radiofrequency or ultrasound. The downside: They each take time to show their true endpoints, says Michael Gold, MD, of the Gold Skincare Center in Nashville ([goldskincare.com](http://goldskincare.com)). "Skin tightening with devices such as the Alma Accent ([almalasers.com](http://almalasers.com)), Sciton SkinTyte ([sciton.com](http://sciton.com)) or Cutera



### Surgical Intervention

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## Once in a Lifetime

a dramatic change. "The most common requests we get from brides are breast augmentation, rhinoplasty and liposuction," says Peter Geldner, MD, plastic surgeon with The Geldner Center in Chicago (mygeldnercenter.com). "For the mothers of the brides, it's facelifts." Dr. Geldner insists on at least three months of post-op recovery time between the surgery and the event. "For honest-to-goodness surgery, you want to leave at least three to six months," says Dr. Geldner. "At two months, rhinoplasty patients will still have swelling. For facelifts, I prefer at least three to four months. At six months post-op, these patients look fabulous."

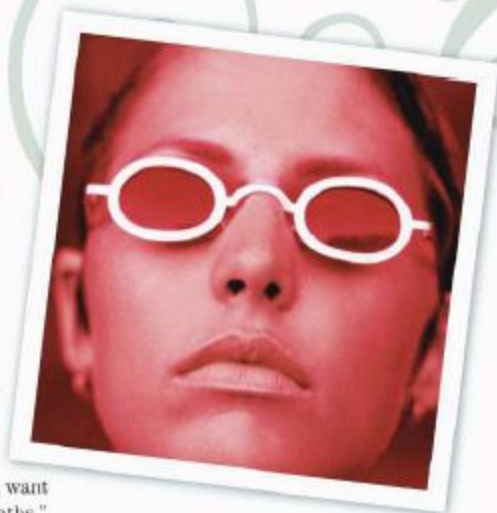
## Blemish Control

Patients who struggle with severe acne will want nothing more than relief from their blemishes on a day when all eyes (and cameras) are on their skin. Acne is challenging to

*"We can use intralesional steroids to treat big cysts quickly, and we regularly use the Isolaz to make acne lesions go away faster."*

control at any time, and even more so when one is on a tight schedule. Optimal control requires several months of pre-planning. "It may take three to six months to get good control with topicals, oral antibiotics, face washes and peels," says Dr. Lahijani. "Light treatments may offer some faster clearance."

If time is tight, Dr. Schulman has found that "sometimes a salicylic peel combined with IPL—particularly in the blue and green wavelengths—will cut down some of the redness and inflammation, but generally you need a lot of time to treat these patients."



Dr. Gold concurs, adding that, "We can use intralesional steroids to treat big cysts quickly, and we also regularly use Isolaz [Solta Medical, isolaz.com] photopneumatic therapy to make acne lesions go away faster. We expect our patients to begin clearing within two days of treatment." For optimal results, Dr. Gold recommends three to five treatments spaced two weeks apart.

"If a patient has just a few blemishes, she can also come in a couple of days

prior to the event for a steroid injection," says Dr. Schulman. "These need only a day or two to take effect."

## Special Event Distinctions

The main point to remember when treating a patient in anticipation of a special event is to "Stay a little on the conservative side. You want to leave enough time to correct any problems," says Dr. Schulman. "I'm very careful with timing because I would feel really guilty if there was a bride out there

## Once in a Lifetime

worrying about bruises or an overfilled appearance on her wedding day."

If bruising does not resolve in time for the event, don't panic. Instead, have a plan in place. "If the patient still has bruising, we offer camouflage makeup," says Dr. Geldner. "If we can't conceal it, we will send the patient to a professional makeup artist who can camouflage any imperfections."

## Attracting Special Event Patients

With a patient base that is primarily female, cosmetic practitioners will inevitably encounter patients preparing for special events. You can also take some steps to reach out to women who want to look their best for their once-in-a-lifetime moment, whether it's a

wedding, beauty pageant or red carpet party. In Nashville, Dr. Gold offers bridal packages in conjunction with local bridal shows. His practice includes both a dermatology center and spa, so he offers facials and makeovers to bridal parties. Dr. Gold also works with local television and movie producers as well as entertainment industry agents to make sure their clients know the range of services available to help them look their best for award shows, album covers and special career-boosting events.



If you are aware that an existing patient has an important event on the horizon, you can gently remind her that it's best to start planning early. This can come as a relief to patients

*The best physicians will dissuade a patient from getting a procedure too close to an event.*

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who are already overwhelmed with event-related tasks. "Some patients think that fillers and Botox are very short-term so they wait until the last minute to come in," says Dr. Lahijani. "If I'm aware that the patient has an event coming up, I remind her that the injectables will last for a few months. So she doesn't have to put it off until the last minute. I tell the patient, 'Let's schedule a month ahead. I'll see you a week later for touchups and you'll be all set for the event.'"

If a patient does make a last-minute request, it is incumbent upon the physician to use good judgment, says Dr. Geldner. "If this is an elective surgery or procedure, you need to take the appropriate time. A patient will come in and say, 'I'm getting married in a month and I need surgery,' and you do need to sit on your hands at that point. The best physicians will dissuade a patient from getting a procedure too close to an event. Use caution and thoughtfulness." ■

*Inga Hansen is the executive editor of MedEsthetics.*