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Found: Younger- Looking HANDS

One woman's quest for fewer spots and wrinkles can help you fight the signs of aging, too **By Coco Myers**

Like most women, I fret about lines and blotches on my face, but I mostly ignore my hands. Sure, I get a manicure now and then, and I slather on cream when I remember to. But otherwise, I barely give them a second thought. Then one day, after a very stressful period in my life, I looked down and barely recognized them: When had my hands become so paper-dry, wrinkly, veiny, and splattered with spots? For all the TLC I give my face, I realized that my hands were a dead giveaway of my age—52. (In fact, research shows that most people can accurately guess how old a woman is just by looking at her hands.) I soon grew tired of wearing long sleeves as a disguise, so I resolved to give my hands a “lift.” Over six months, I tried a spectrum of at-home and in-office treatments. Here's what I learned from the pros...and what really worked. →



zap and your zip code—anywhere from \$250 to \$650.

For diffuse spots, an all-over treatment is preferable. The plus: It will address spots and wrinkles in one go. Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) zeroes in on both brown and red pigment, and also stimulates wrinkle-fighting collagen. The light is beamed below the skin's surface, so there's no visible injury or downtime. But in contrast to the laser, you usually need three to five sessions—\$300 to \$600 apiece—each spaced a month apart. Another all-over approach is fractional laser, or Fraxel. I opted for the mid-strength version known as Re:store. It works under the surface, creating pinprick-size micro-wounds that form new, smoother skin as they heal. While Fraxel Re:store produces more dramatic results than IPL, it requires a day of downtime. You typically need three to five sessions, each about \$700 to \$1,200, spaced over three to five months. I found it worth the mild pain: The skin tone on the backs of my hands became impressively even.

No matter which option you choose, you have to be vigilant about protecting your hands with sunscreen after treatment, or those spots will reappear. Try **Boots No7 Protect & Perfect Hand Cream SPF 15** (\$14, Target; 2), a GH 2010 Anti-Aging Award Honorable **Mention**.

THE TROUBLE
LOOSE, WRINKLY SKIN
AND POPPING VEINS

Hands are just like faces—they gradually lose fat, or volume, over time. Without that natural padding, hand skin becomes slack, creating even more wrinkling, and tendons, joints, and veins appear more prominent. In fact, veins may actually increase slightly in size. “They dilate as the con-

nective tissue decreases with age,” says New York City dermatologist Macrene Alexiades-Armenakas, M.D., Ph.D. “And if your skin is pale, their bluish-purple color shows through that much more.”

THE TREATMENT You can increase skin thickness with retinoic acid: This anti-ager improves skin texture and decreases wrinkles by speeding up cell turnover and boosting collagen production. The prescription strength has a reputation for being irritating, but don't dismiss it if you've had a bad experience. “I've found retinoids like **Renova** [\$150 plus] are much easier on the hands than on the face,” says Dr. Alexiades-Armenakas. Over-the-counter creams with the less powerful retinol or retinyl palmitate, like **Yes to Blueberries Seed Fund Gardener's Hand Cream** (\$9, yestocarrots.com), are even gentler. Still, you may or may not see an improvement. Exfoliating also encourages new skin, but most body scrubs are too rough for hand skin; instead, look for a sloughing cream, like **Philosophy Time on Your Hands** (\$18.50, Sephora; 5), with glycolic acid. Chemical peels are a stronger route to cell renewal and offer a quick skin perk-up. If you go the at-home route, one option is **Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare Alpha Beta Daily Body Peel** (\$78, amazon.com; 4). A dermatologist's glycolic peel will cost more (about \$200) and requires multiple sessions for maximum results, but the concentration can be tailored for fragile hand skin.

Only an in-office procedure can address protruding veins. Consider a laser like **DioLite**, which heats and shrinks vessels in one or two sessions, at \$600 each. Or, for immediate gratification, try a synthetic filler, injected into the space between the tendons.

The most popular these days is a gel called **Radiesse**, which is used off-label for hands (it starts at about \$2,000). Once injected, it stays soft and melds with surrounding tissues, lasting a year or more. On top of instant plumping, it prods skin into producing more collagen. A 2011 study at Sadick Dermatology in New York City deemed it safe, with very minor side effects and impressive results. At nine months, 80% of the patients' hands were improved. A call to Dr. Fusco confirmed this: “I've never had a bad result with Radiesse.”

I decided to give it a try. The process was relatively quick and painless, but right afterward, my hands puffed up like mittens. A week later—the swelling down and bruises gone—I found myself staring at my smooth, filled-out hands with admiration. There is still some redness across my knuckles, and I will continue to pamper and protect. Meanwhile, I've pushed up my sleeves and started wearing bracelets and rings again. Finally, after six months of treatments, my hands are ready for their close-up. ■



Photograph by MARKO METZINGER/STUDIO D