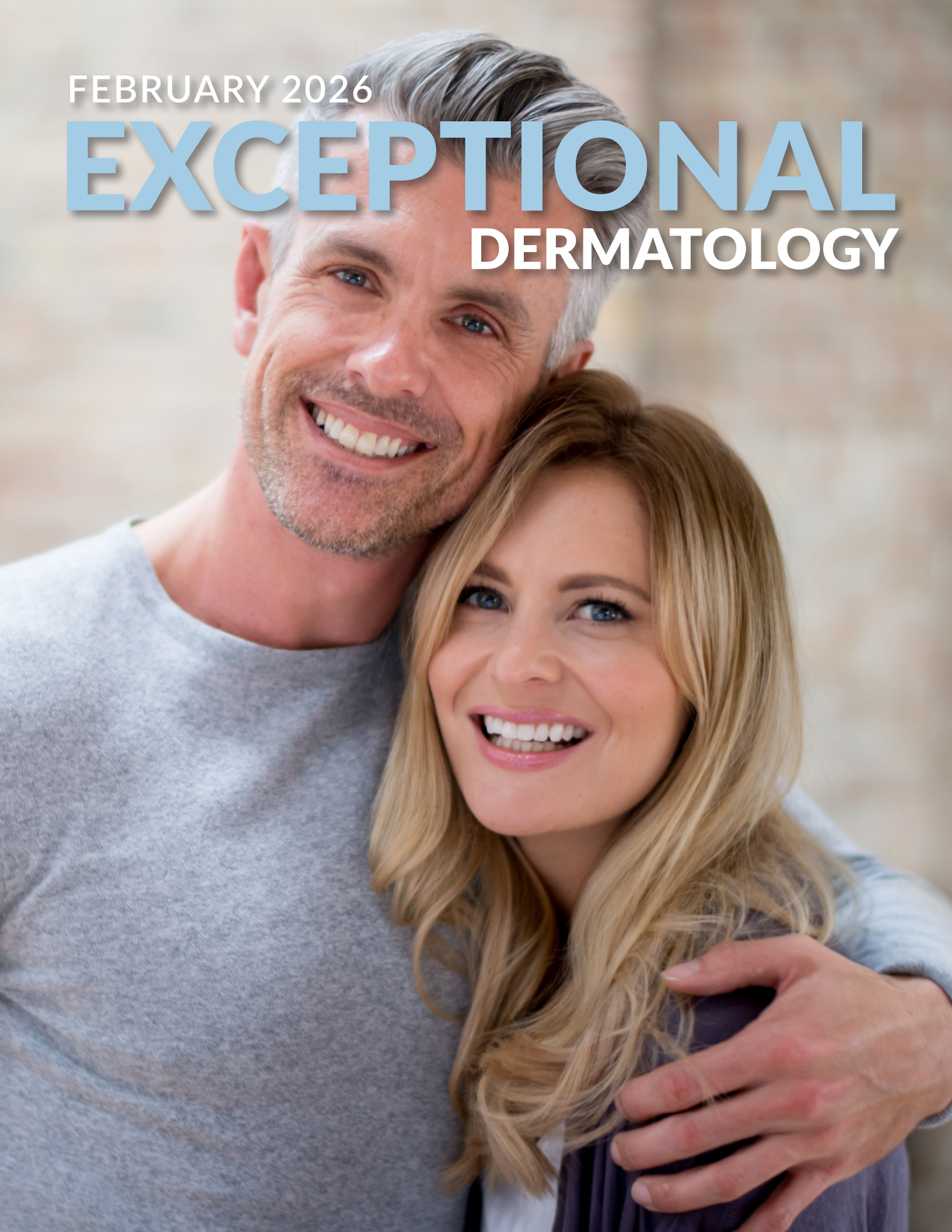


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We'd love to hear your feedback, so we can continue to improve our service to you.

For questions or comments, please send us an email to liz@exceptionaldermatology.com

CONTACT

2720 N Harbor Blvd Ste. 205
Fullerton, CA 92835

(714) 882-5525

www.exceptionaldermatology.com



National Cancer Prevention Month: Why Your Skin Check Can't Wait

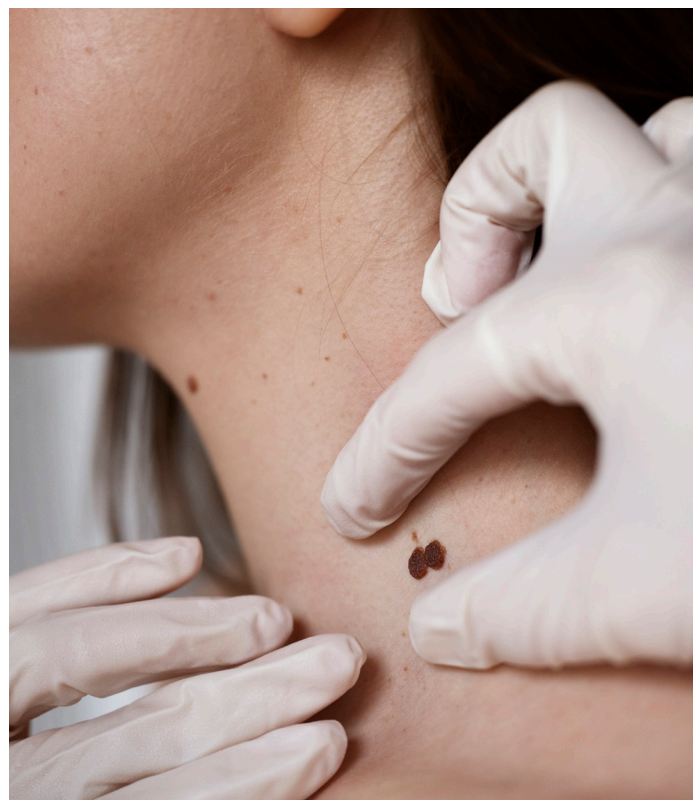
February is often associated with chocolates, roses, and the final stretch of winter. While many of us are focused on Valentine's Day, there is another critical event on the calendar that deserves your attention: National Cancer Prevention Month. This annual observance serves as a powerful reminder that taking proactive steps regarding your health can save your life.

When we think of cancer prevention, our minds often go to diet, exercise, or smoking cessation. While these are vital, we frequently overlook the body's largest organ: the skin. Skin cancer remains the most common form of cancer in the United States, yet it is also one of the most preventable and treatable types when detected early.

This month, we are looking at why you should prioritize a skin cancer exam. It might seem counterintuitive to think about sun damage when you are bundled up in a winter coat, but February is actually the ideal time to visit your dermatologist. By understanding the risks and knowing what to look for, you can take control of your health before the summer sun returns.

The Reality of Skin Cancer Statistics

It is easy to assume that skin cancer only happens to people who spend every day at the beach or use tanning beds religiously. The reality is far more widespread. Current estimates suggest that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer by the age of 70. This statistic includes everyone, regardless of skin tone, age, or lifestyle.



The three most common types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma. Basal and squamous cell carcinomas are highly treatable and rarely spread to other parts of the body, though they can be disfiguring if left unchecked. Melanoma, however, is more aggressive. It accounts for a small percentage of skin cancer cases but causes the majority of skin cancer deaths.

The good news is that the five-year survival rate for melanoma is 99% when it is detected early. This is why routine exams are not just a precaution; they are a necessity. National Cancer Prevention Month is the push many of us need to stop delaying these appointments.

Why Winter is the Perfect Time for a Check-Up

Scheduling a skin exam in February makes strategic sense for several reasons. During the summer months, your skin is often tanned or sunburned, which can sometimes make it difficult for dermatologists to distinguish between sun damage and potentially cancerous moles.

In the winter, your skin is generally at its palest. This contrast makes it easier for a doctor to spot abnormalities, new growths, or changes in pigmentation. Additionally, if you do require a biopsy or a minor procedure to remove a suspicious mole, healing is often easier in the winter. You are less likely to expose the

healing site to direct sunlight or irritate it with sweat and outdoor activities.

Getting checked now also gives you a clean slate before the warmer months arrive. You can head into spring knowing your baseline and understanding exactly what precautions you need to take based on your specific risk profile.

What Happens During a Skin Exam?

Fear of the unknown or embarrassment often keeps people from making an appointment. Knowing what to expect can alleviate that anxiety. A skin cancer exam is generally quick, painless, and non-invasive.

When you arrive at the dermatology office, you will likely be asked to change into a medical gown. Your healthcare provider will then perform a visual inspection of your skin from head to toe. They aren't just looking at your arms and face; they will check your scalp, behind your ears, between your toes, and even your fingernails. Skin cancer can hide in places that never see the sun.

Healthcare providers often use a small, handheld magnification device called a dermatoscope. This allows them to see the structures of the skin beneath the surface. If they find a spot that looks suspicious, they might take a small biopsy, which feels similar to a quick pinch. The entire process usually takes less than 15 minutes. It is a very small investment of time for significant peace of mind.

The ABCDEs of Melanoma

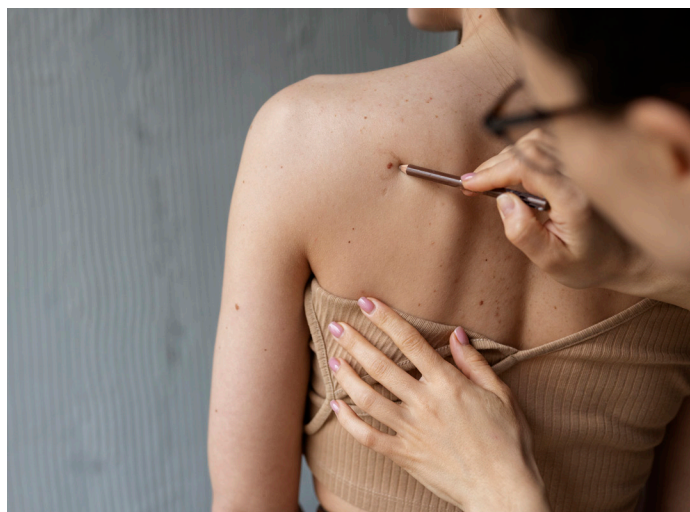
While an annual professional exam is crucial, you are the one living in your skin every day. You are the most likely person to notice if something changes. Dermatologists recommend performing self-exams once a month. To do this effectively, you need to know what you are looking for.

The medical community uses the "ABCDE" rule to help patients identify potential melanoma:

Asymmetry: Draw an imaginary line down the middle of the mole. If one half does not match the other, it is asymmetrical. Benign moles are usually symmetrical.

Border: Look at the edges of the mole. Benign moles usually have smooth, even borders. Early melanomas tend to have uneven, scalloped, or notched edges.

Color: Most benign moles are a single shade of brown. A warning sign is a mole



that contains multiple colors or shades, such as different tans, browns, blacks, or even reds, whites, or blues.

Diameter: Melanomas are usually larger in diameter than the eraser on your pencil (about 6mm), although they can be smaller when they are first detected.

Evolving: This is perhaps the most important factor. Any change in size, shape, color, or elevation of a spot on your skin, or any new symptom like bleeding, itching, or crusting, points to danger. If a mole starts to look different from the others, get it checked.

Risk Factors You Can't Ignore

Everyone is at risk for skin cancer, but certain factors can increase your likelihood of developing it. Understanding your risk profile helps you and your doctor determine how vigilant you need to be.

People with fair skin that burns easily, those with red or blond hair, and those with light-colored eyes naturally have less melanin protection against UV rays. However, people with darker skin tones are also at risk and are often diagnosed at later stages because of the misconception that they are immune. In people of color, skin cancer often appears in less obvious areas, such as the palms of the hands or the soles of the feet.

Your history matters as well. If you had severe, blistering sunburns as a child



or teenager, your risk increases significantly. A family history of skin cancer also plays a role, as does having a large number of moles on your body.

Prioritize Your Health This February

We often put everyone else's needs before our own, but your health is the foundation of everything else you do. This February, in honor of National Cancer Prevention Month, make a commitment to your future self.

A skin check is a simple, proactive step that offers reassurance and protection. Don't wait for a suspicious spot to appear. Call Exceptional Dermatology Care today, schedule your annual exam, and enjoy the rest of the year knowing you have taken the best possible care of your skin.



Love Your Skin: Get Valentine's Day Ready with Vivace Ultra

February 14th is right around the corner. For many, that date signals dinner reservations, searching for the perfect gift, or perhaps planning a fun “Galentine’s” night out. Regardless of your relationship status, Valentine’s Day is ultimately a celebration of love, and that should start with loving yourself.

There is no better confidence booster than looking in the mirror and seeing a radiant, glowing complexion. However, mid-February also coincides with the peak of winter. Cold air and indoor heating often leave skin feeling dry, dull, and lackluster—hardly the dewy look most of us aim for on a special occasion.

If you are looking for a way to revitalize your appearance without invasive surgery or weeks of recovery time, Vivace Ultra™ offers a compelling solution. This advanced aesthetic treatment combines radiofrequency (RF) energy with microneedling to

contour, tighten, and rejuvenate the skin. It's the perfect "pre-game" strategy to ensure you look your absolute best when the big day arrives.

What is Vivace Ultra?

To understand why this treatment is becoming a favorite for pre-event prep, you need to understand the technology behind it. Vivace Ultra is a uniform radiofrequency microneedling device. It is FDA-cleared and represents the newest generation of minimally invasive skin renovation.

The device works by combining three powerful concepts:

Microneedling: Sterile, gold-tipped needles create microscopic channels in the skin. This triggers the body's natural healing process, stimulating the production of fresh collagen and elastin.

Radiofrequency (RF) Energy: While the needles create the channels, the device

delivers RF heat energy deep into the dermis. This heat tightens existing collagen fibers and further accelerates the production of new ones.

Ultrasound Visualization: This is what sets the "Ultra" apart from older devices. It allows providers to "see" into the skin, ensuring the needles and heat are delivered to the exact depth required for your specific skin density and concerns.

The result is a treatment that is incredibly precise, customizable, and effective for a wide variety of skin types.

Why Choose Vivace Ultra for Valentine's Day?

There are plenty of facials and lasers on the market, but Vivace Ultra offers a unique set of benefits that makes it ideal for event preparation.

Immediate "Glow" with Long-Term Results

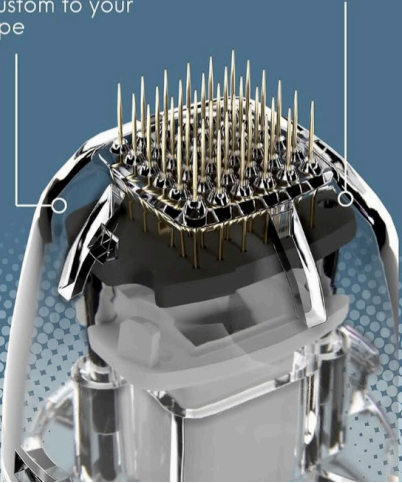
One of the biggest advantages of RF microneedling is the dual-phase result. Almost immediately after the initial redness subsides, patients often notice a "filter-like" quality to their skin. The texture appears smoother, and the tone looks more even. This instant gratification is perfect for a date night. However, the real magic happens over the following weeks as your collagen production kicks into high gear, leading to tighter, firmer skin long after the



VivaceUltra Microneedling

Minimally invasive
and custom to your
skin type

Two unique
technologies into one
personalized treatment



chocolates are eaten.

Minimal Downtime

Many effective aesthetic treatments require you to hide away for days while your skin peels or heals. With Valentine's Day fast approaching, you likely don't have time for a week of social downtime. Vivace Ultra is designed with a precision robotic motor that inserts the needles smoothly, reducing trauma to the skin's surface.

Most patients experience some redness immediately following the procedure—similar to a mild sunburn—but this usually dissipates within 24 hours. You can typically return to your normal routine the next day.

Addressing Multiple Concerns at Once

Winter skin often brings a host of issues. Vivace Ultra is a multitasker. It helps reduce the appearance of:

- Fine lines and wrinkles
- Enlarged pores
- Acne scars
- Uneven skin texture
- Mild skin laxity

Ideally Timing Your Treatment

While Vivace Ultra has minimal downtime, timing is still everything when prepping for a specific event.

To be perfectly camera-ready for Valentine's Day, we recommend scheduling your session 10 to 14 days before the holiday.

Here is why this timeline works best:

Safety Buffer: It gives your skin ample time to fully recover from any immediate post-treatment sensitivity or mild swelling.

The "Settle" Period: While you get an immediate boost, the skin looks its most radiant and settled about a week or two post-treatment.

Makeup Application: You generally need to avoid makeup for 24 hours after the treatment to keep the micro-channels clean. By booking in advance, you ensure you can apply your favorite

foundation or lipstick without worry on the big night.

Beyond the Face: Treat Your Neck and Body

We often focus so much on our facial skincare that we neglect other areas. If your Valentine's Day outfit involves a lower neckline, a backless dress, or showing off your arms, Vivace Ultra can help there, too.

The versatility of the device allows providers to treat the neck, décolletage (chest), hands, and even areas of the body that might need a little tightening. Using ultrasound mapping, your provider can adjust the depth for these thinner or different skin areas, ensuring safety and efficacy. Treating your neck and chest ensures your radiant look is cohesive from top to bottom.

What to Expect During the Procedure

If you are new to aesthetic treatments, the idea of “needles” might sound intimidating. However, patient comfort is a priority with the Vivace Ultra system.

Before the treatment begins, a topical numbing cream is applied to the treatment area for 30 to 45 minutes. This significantly reduces sensation. Most patients report feeling light pressure and a warm sensation, but very little pain. The device's robotic motor is extremely quiet and smooth, which eliminates the “snapping” sensation



common with older microneedling pens.

The actual treatment takes about 45 minutes to an hour, depending on the areas being covered. Afterward, a soothing serum or mask is often applied to calm the skin and accelerate the healing process.

Fall in Love with Your Reflection

This February, shift the focus from buying gifts to investing in yourself. Confidence is the most attractive thing you can wear, and smooth, luminous skin is a great foundation for that confidence.

Whether you are planning a romantic evening with a partner or a night of self-care at home, prepping your skin with Vivace Ultra ensures you put your best face forward. Don't wait until the last minute—consult with your aesthetic provider today to get your appointment on the books before the holiday rush.



Xeomin vs. Botox: Which Treatment is Right for You?

When you start noticing those first few fine lines turning into deeper wrinkles, the world of medical aesthetics can suddenly feel very vast. For decades, Botox has been the household name, the go-to solution for smoothing out foreheads and crow's feet. But in recent years, a new contender has gained serious traction: Xeomin.

If you're standing in front of the mirror pulling back your skin and wondering which injectable is the best choice, you aren't alone. Both treatments are FDA-approved, derived from the same bacterium, and work in similar ways to relax muscles and reduce wrinkles. Yet, they have distinct differences that might make one a better fit for your lifestyle and biology than the other.

This guide breaks down the science, effectiveness, and important differences between Xeomin and Botox so you can walk into your next consultation with confidence.

Understanding Neurotoxins: How They Work

Before diving into the “versus” aspect, it helps to understand what these products actually do. Both Botox (onabotulinumtoxinA) and Xeomin (incobotulinumtoxinA) belong to a class of injectables known as neuromodulators.

When injected into specific facial muscles, these neurotoxins block the release of acetylcholine, a chemical messenger that triggers muscle contractions. By temporarily relaxing these muscles, the skin above them smooths out, softening existing wrinkles and preventing new ones from deepening.

While they share the same mechanism of action, the way they are manufactured and formulated sets them apart.

What is Botox?

Botox Cosmetic, manufactured by Allergan, was the first drug of its kind to be approved by the FDA for cosmetic use. It has a long track record of safety and efficacy, having been used for decades not just for wrinkles, but for medical conditions like chronic migraines, excessive sweating (hyperhidrosis), and muscle spasms.

Botox is formulated with a complex of proteins surrounding the active molecule. These accessory proteins act as a protective coating, but they also play a role in how the body interacts with the

drug.

What is Xeomin?

Xeomin, made by Merz Aesthetics, is often referred to as “naked Botox.” FDA-approved for cosmetic use in 2011, Xeomin is a more purified form of the neurotoxin. During the manufacturing process, the accessory proteins found in Botox are filtered out, leaving only the active therapeutic component.

This lack of additives is Xeomin’s primary selling point. It appeals to those looking for a “cleaner” injectable and has specific implications for patients who may have built up a tolerance to other treatments.

Key Differences Between Xeomin and Botox

While the end result—smoother skin—is often indistinguishable to the naked eye, the journey there varies slightly between the two.





1. The Protein Factor (Purity)

The most significant scientific difference lies in the formulation. Because Botox includes accessory proteins, there is a rare but possible chance that a patient's immune system could develop antibodies to these proteins over time. If this happens, the body might resist the treatment, making Botox less effective or requiring higher doses to achieve the same result.

Xeomin, lacking these surface proteins, is less likely to trigger antibody formation. For patients who feel like Botox “just doesn’t work like it used to,” switching to Xeomin often provides a solution because the body doesn’t recognize it as a foreign invader in the same way.

2. Storage and Stability

Botox requires refrigeration before use. This cold-chain requirement is standard for many biologics but adds a layer of logistical complexity for providers.

Xeomin, conversely, does not need to be refrigerated before reconstitution. This stability makes distribution and storage easier for clinics, although this difference rarely impacts the patient experience directly.

3. Onset of Results

Patience is a virtue, especially with injectables. Generally, you can expect to see results from Botox within 3 to 7 days, with full effects visible around the two-week mark.

Xeomin has a comparable timeline, though some studies and anecdotal evidence suggest it might have a slightly slower onset, taking 5 to 7 days to kick in. However, once active, the muscle relaxation is just as potent.

4. Diffusion and Spread

“Diffusion” refers to how much the product spreads from the injection site. There is a common belief in the aesthetics community that Xeomin may diffuse slightly more than Botox. This can be a benefit or a drawback depending on the area being treated.

For covering larger areas like the forehead, a product that spreads easily can offer a softer, more natural look. For areas requiring extreme precision, like around the eyes or lips, a provider might prefer the tighter control of Botox. However, skilled injectors can manipulate both products effectively to

achieve the desired outcome.

Effectiveness and Longevity: Which Lasts Longer?

The million-dollar question for most patients is: “How long will I look wrinkle-free?”

Clinical studies generally show that Botox and Xeomin are non-inferior to one another. This means they are equally effective. Both treatments typically last between 3 to 4 months.

However, individual metabolism plays a huge role. Some “fast metabolizers” may find their results fade in 8 weeks, while others enjoy smooth skin for up to 6 months. Factors that influence longevity include:

Dosage: Higher units often equal longer duration.

Muscle Strength: Stronger muscles may overcome the toxin faster.

Activity Level: High-intensity athletes sometimes metabolize the product more quickly.

There is no definitive data proving one brand consistently outlasts the other across the general population.

Is One Safer Than the Other?

Both Botox and Xeomin are FDA-approved and have excellent safety



profiles when administered by licensed, trained professionals. Side effects are generally mild and temporary, including bruising or swelling at the injection site.

The Verdict

Ultimately, the skill of the injector matters far more than the brand of the neurotoxin. A talented healthcare provider can achieve stunning, natural results with either Botox or Xeomin.

If you are new to aesthetics, discuss your goals and concerns during your consultation. Whether you choose the established veteran or the purified newcomer, both Xeomin and Botox offer a reliable path to refreshing your look and boosting your confidence.