Therapy (Deka)—inflits anything close to the harrowing collateral damage of their prehistoric predecessors. “In most cases, we’re talking about four to seven days of what looks like a very bad sunburn,” says Goldberg. “And don’t forget, it’s usually a one-shot deal.”

**THE NEW FRONTIER**

The innovations don’t stop there. Like the keypad on your gym’s elliptical machine, the fractional CO₂ allows derms to tailor the intensity of its pitch pattern—the distance between each little dot as well as its depth—with the push of a button. Sarnoff might set the device “closer together for a more aggressive treatment around the mouth or crow’s-feet,” further apart “on sensitive areas like the jawline.”

When I drop by dermatologist Fredric Brandt, M.D.’s, Manhattan office, he shows me the Lumenis ActiveFX’s newly customized handpiece. As I peer at its lens, he flips through an assortment of tiny dancing geometric CO₂ light patterns—circles, parallelograms, hexagons, and triangles—that, when projected onto the skin, access “the hard-to-reach angles around the nose or mouth.” Putting an end to “a 40-year-old face floating above a 50-year-old chest,” the new CO₂ lasers treat “the neck, forearms, and tops of the hands”—fragile areas that were prone to scarring and discoloration under the reign of the old CO₂.

To combat the first signs of aging, dermatologists like Manhattan’s Patricia Wexler, M.D., are sticking with gentler resurfacer like the original Fraxel (now called Fraxel Restore). However, there are instances where Wexler feels the potency of fractional carbon dioxide is appropriate for younger skin—for example, to treat acne scars in patients as young as their 20s.

Roy Geronemus, M.D., a dermatologist in New York, is using his Fraxel Repair to diminish telltale plastic-surgery scars around the face and breasts, and is even using it around some patients’ eyes as a substitute for surgery. One look at the before and after pictures he has recently presented at the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery conference in Orlando, and I can see why: Droopy corners, hooded eyelids, and stubborn crow’s-feet virtually disappear after a single blast. At approximately $2,000 a session, “it’s a fraction of what you’d pay for an eye-lift,” he says. (A full face may cost upwards of $4,000.)

**WHAT’S NEXT**

Like any emerging technology, the first generation of fractional CO₂ lasers are works in progress. Lasers says Goldberg, “are like laptops—your new model is constantly being updated.” If the old CO₂ was the truck-size monitor on your first Macintosh, the fractional CO₂ is your new MacBook Air: fabulous but soon to be tweaked in exciting new ways.

Though they remain unsuitable for darker skins, which may be prone to heat-related scarring, the new CO₂ have slightly more range than their predecessors, extending from fair to light-olive and, in some cases, light Hispanic and Asian skin tones. As for hypopigmentation (especially, permanently colorless patches of skin that appeared in patients up to a year after the old CO₂ procedures were performed), “fractional technology seems to have virtually eliminated the risk,” says Alexides, who is currently conducting the FDA trials for Deka’s DOT Therapy device. “But it’s still early, and there may be limits to how close together each little dot can be placed without causing a similar effect.”

Not unlike the feeling one might experience while looking at Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte—Georges Seurat’s pointillist painting from 1884, with its tiny pixelated dots and early Neo-Impressionist overtones, the significance of the new CO₂ seems greater than the sum of its parts. “Ten years ago, I couldn’t have guessed that we’d be delivering carbon-dioxide laser light without the downtime or the risks,” says Goldberg. “Just imagine what’s next.”

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**heavy-metal manicure**

Goodbye black, hello . . . silver. The manicure of this moment is futuristic, coolly robotic. It looks as though you’ve dipped your fingertips in mercury. The nails are by Minx, and they are metallic, mirror-finish, foil-like “coverings” descended from NASCAR-decal technology. Zoe Kravitz (page 202) is a fan. Lauren Santo Domingo—right, armored in silver—first learned about them from legendary New York manicurist Honey. She then had Lisa Logan—the pro behind Beyoncé’s gold Minx manicure over for a last-minute house call before kicking off New York Fashion Week. They won’t chip because they’re made of film, not polish, pressed onto the nail bed with heat (no drying time: brilliant), and they won’t damage nails since they’re chemical-free. For salons, minxnails.com.

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**NO JEWELRY NECESSARY**

LAUREN SANTO DOMINGO’S SILVER MINX NAILS BY LISA LOGAN.