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Dermatology Update

by Dr. Debra Price

Questions and Answers

Herbal supplements

A client of mine was scheduled to have surgery for removal of a skin cancer from her nose and her dermatologist rescheduled her surgery for the following week because she was taking garlic. I was not aware that garlic could increase bleeding. Are there any other herbal supplements that do the same thing?

Yes, garlic, ginkgo and ginseng can decrease platelet function and cause increased bleeding during surgery. Ginseng and garlic should be discontinued one week prior to surgery and ginkgo three days prior to surgery. Mahuang can increase heart rate, and kava can have a sedative effect. It is important for patients to inform their doctors of all herbal remedies they are taking before undergoing any surgery.

Copper's role in skin care

What is your opinion about the value of copper as an anti-aging ingredient?

Topical creams that contain copper have been touted to reduce wrinkles and enhance wound healing. Copper does play a role as a factor in antioxidant reactions in our body and has been shown to accelerate wound healing. It has also been shown to stimulate collagen and glycosaminoglycan synthesis. In initial studies facial creams containing copper have been shown to improve the appearance of wrinkles. While these results are encouraging, further studies on a

larger scale are needed to confirm this initial data, including histologic studies. Also, these findings cannot automatically be extrapolated to other copper containing creams that may contain different concentrations and formulations. Nonetheless, the use of copper as an anti-aging ingredient appears to be safe and well tolerated and may be an effective addition to our topical rejuvenation armamentarium.

Increasing sensitivity

I have a facial client who suffers from rosacea and sensitive skin. Do you have any recommendations regarding ingredients to avoid? Also, she says that she loves to cook but finds her rosacea flares when she spends a lot of time in the kitchen. What do you recommend?

The ingredients most commonly associated with irritation in rosacea patients include alcohol, witch hazel, menthol, peppermint, clove oil, eucalyptus oil, and salicylic acid. Astringents and exfoliants also exacerbate rosacea and sensitive skin.

In the kitchen, your client should drink cool liquids or chew on ice chips, keep the room cool with air conditioning and a fan, take frequent breaks, and intermittently dab her face and neck with a cool cloth.

Extreme rosacea

I have a client who suffers from rosacea and a persistently red face. She says that she has tried many topi-

cal agents but she says she continues to be embarrassed by her red face. Do you have any recommendations?

Medical therapy is highly effective in clearing the inflammatory lesions of rosacea, but laser treatments are the most effective means of clearing redness and blood vessels. Newer lasers can generally clear redness in several treatments without the purpura (bruising) associated with older laser treatments, if your client's dermatologist is not experienced in the use of lasers, suggest that she request a referral to a dermatologist with laser expertise or contact the American Society of Laser Medicine and Surgery for a referral to a laser specialist.

Preventing hair breakage

I'm an esthetician, so I don't know much about hair, but since I had a perm several weeks ago, I have been experiencing hair breakage and hair loss. Suffice to say, I am concerned and distressed. Do you have any recommendations for me? A hairdresser at my day spa/salon says the problem will improve.

I suspect that you are correct and your hair breakage is a result of your recent permanent. Permanent waving does result in a weakened hair shaft and can cause hair breakage. Since the hair shaft has already been weakened and damaged, you cannot reverse the problem entirely, but you should attempt to

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decrease any further hair shaft damage by using a mild conditioning shampoo for damaged or chemically treated hair. You should also apply a protein conditioner following shampooing. Hydrolyzed protein conditioners can strengthen the hair shaft by coating the damaged hair shaft, thus decreasing breakage.

Wrinkles from smoking

I have been a smoker for many years and have recently stopped smoking. I have horrible wrinkles around my mouth. I know that the sun causes wrinkles, but my dermatologist says my smoking is responsible for these ones around my mouth. Is there any evidence of this?

Most of us are aware of the association of lung cancer, pulmonary and heart disease and smoking. The association of smoking and wrinkling while less publicized is real and troublesome. Fortunately, if stopped early enough the adverse cosmetic effects can be reversed, but if continued for decades, the changes can become persistent. The smoker's face results from skin damage by free radicals generated by cigarette smoke. Obviously, discontinuing smoking early is the best solution. Topical antioxidant creams containing green tea extract, grape seed extract, alpha lipoic acid and or vitamin C may theoretically be somewhat protective in those who chose to continue to smoke, but this remains to be proven. Avoidance of cumulative sun damage by the daily use of a sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or greater is recommended. Once the damage has occurred options such as laser resurfacing, dermabrasion, nonablative laser and topical retinoids should be considered.

Tazarac, alternative acne therapy

Are there any new acne therapies available?

Tazarac cream and gel are the newest topical retinoids for the treatment of inflammatory and noninflammatory acne. Tazarac[®] cream recently gained FDA approval expanding formulation options. Like Retin-A[®], and Differin[®] it acts on the microcomedo, the precursor of all acne lesions. Like other retinoids, Tazarac[®] can cause irritation in some individuals. Adjustment of frequency of usage and supplemental use of a moisturizer generally arrests this adverse side effect. ■

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