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esthétiques

AMERICAN EDITION

LNE—the magazine for skin care and spa professionals July 2002 \$7.50



Dermatology Update

by Dr. Debra Price

Questions and Answers

Exercise and skin problems

I am an avid athlete and suffer from recurrent fungal infections and acne. Do you think my skin problems are related to my athletic activities, and do you have any recommendation to avoid these problems?

Your skin problems may be exacerbated by your recreational activities. Sweating impairs the barrier function of the skin and traps moisture against the skin. This results in an increased susceptibility to bacterial and fungal infections. To lessen this tendency, wear absorbent socks, shower immediately after exercising and towel dry your toe-webs individually.

Acne mechanica is a sports-related condition caused by friction, heat and occlusion in susceptible individuals. Again, showering immediately after athletic activity and wearing clothing under athletic gear that keeps moisture away from the skin may lessen its occurrence in susceptible individuals. Lastly, one of the greatest hazards of outdoor athletic activity is sun exposure. Athletes who engage in their activities outdoors, should use a broad spectrum sunscreen and hat and attempt to avoid midday sun exposure.

"Jogger's nipples"

I am a marathon runner and often suffer from a painful irritated skin condition on my nipples after running. Is there anything I can do to avoid this problem?

Botox parties are highly inappropriate as it is unsafe to have Botox injections performed in any environment other than a controlled medical setting. Besides, it is contraindicated to drink alcohol before, during or after Botox injections.

The painful condition you describe is known as "jogger's nipples." The condition is caused by friction causing chafing when your shirt rubs against your nipples. You should wear an adhesive tape or Band-Aid over your nipples to protect them from this friction injury. The application of petroleum jelly prior to running is also helpful.

Help for pigmentation loss

Several years ago, I had laser resurfacing above my lip for wrinkles. Although my wrinkles improved, the procedure caused me to lose pigment in that area, leaving it whiter than the surrounding skin color. Is there anything that can be done to improve my problem?

Yes, recently the FDA approved the XTRAC Eximer laser for the treatment of leukoderma (loss of pigment) secondary to laser resurfacing, trauma and burns. It is the first truly effective therapeutic

option for repigmentation of these conditions. The treatment sessions do not cause any patient downtime, and require no anesthesia. This laser has also been shown to be effective in repigmenting stretch marks.

Treatment for melasma

Are there any new treatments for melasma?

Tri-Luma™ is a new prescription topical cream that is highly effective in improving melasma. It combines 4 percent hydroquinone, tretinoin 0.05 percent and fluocinolone acetate 0.01 percent (a topical steroid). Of course, any treatment regimen for melasma should also include the use of a broad spectrum sunscreen and superficial exfoliating product to hasten resolution.

Botox parties

Since Botox got FDA approved for treatment of frown lines, I have been hearing a lot about Botox parties. What are your thoughts about having this procedure performed at a social gathering?

It is highly inappropriate and unsafe to have Botox injections performed in any environment other than a controlled medical setting. While Botox procedures are highly effective and safe when performed by experienced physicians in a medical environment,

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they are potentially dangerous if performed in a social setting or by an inexperienced individual. Furthermore, it is contraindicated and unsafe for patients to consume alcohol before, during or soon after Botox injections.

Skin and internal health

What is your view on the concept that skin is a reflection of the body's internal health?

The skin can sometimes be a mirror to your body's internal health. The color of one's skin can be a clue to underlying diseases. Pallor can be a sign of anemia; hyperpigmentation, a sign of Addison's disease or adrenal insufficiency; and jaundice or yellow skin, a sign of liver disease or a pancreatic or biliary tract tumor. Itching also can be a presenting sign of liver or biliary tract disease or certain cancers

such as lymphoma. There are also specific skin rashes associated with systemic diseases such as hepatitis, diabetes, connective tissue disease and even cancer, among others. Perioral wrinkles can be a sign of cigarette smoking, a known cause of cardiac and pulmonary disease.

Foods' effect on wrinkles

Is there any relation between diet and wrinkles?

There have been some studies to suggest that individuals who eat healthy diets will develop less wrinkles. Eating lots of vegetables and fruits and foods low in fat boosts the skin's natural defense against sun damage and may help prevent wrinkles. One study noted that those people whose diets consisted of leafy green vegetables, olive oil, multigrain breads and nuts were less susceptible to wrin-

king caused by the sun. Of course, protection from sun exposure through the use of a broad spectrum sunscreen, protective clothing and avoidance of midday sun exposure is your best defense against skin aging. ■

Debra Price, M.D., graduated from New York University School of Medicine and interned at New York University Medical Center. She is a diplomate of the American Board of Dermatology and is an assistant professor at University of Miami's department of dermatology and cutaneous surgery. An author of several scientific papers, Dr. Price is an award-winning dermatologist and past president of the Miami Dermatologic Society, in Florida. She has a private practice in Kendall, FL. To reach Debra Price, M.D., please call (305) 670-1111.

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