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Dermatology Update

by Dr. Debra Price

Questions and Answers

Crazy skin glue

I have heard about "crazy glue" that is now used instead of sutures for incisions and cuts, is this true?

Dermabond is a sterile liquid, topical skin adhesive that is sometimes used to close clean, uncomplicated wounds that are not under tension. It is most commonly used in pediatric patients, since it does not require injection of local anesthetic. Although the esthetic results are reasonable, most plastic surgeons prefer suturing facial closures.

Thinning hair

I am a postmenopausal woman who has thinning hair. What is the best type of hair spray for me to use?

I recommend you chose a flexible rather than firm hold hair spray. Flexible hair sprays allow the hair to bounce more with movement and are less likely to fracture the hair shaft, when the hair is groomed. The hair spray is easily removed with shampooing, preventing the buildup of hair spray fragments on the hair shaft, which can make the hair appear dull and coarse.

Lupus or rosacea?

How can you tell the difference between a lupus butterfly red mark over the nose and cheeks and rosacea's rash pattern?

A lupus butterfly rash is a red rash over the nose and medial

cheeks. It is not associated with acneiform lesions, telangiectasia, or sebaceous hyperplasia, which is commonly seen in rosacea. Unlike rosacea, it does not extend onto the lateral cheeks and chin area and is not associated with eye symptoms.

Non-steroidal, anti-inflammatory agents like the prescription drug Celebrex have been shown to decrease skin cancer formation in mice.

The pill

I have heard that oral birth control pills can actually be good for your skin, but I have a client who's completely broken out because of it. What is your opinion about the effect of birth control pills on acne?

Oral contraceptive pills increase sex hormone binding globulin and decrease free testosterone, which can help reduce the occurrence of acne. All available oral contraceptive pills are a combination of an estrogen and a progesterone component. Birth control pills have been shown to diminish acne lesions but most studies show improvement in the range of 50 percent, which is often inadequate. Most cases of moderate or severe acne require complimentary therapy. If your client's acne has flared

since she began birth control pills, she should seek evaluation by a dermatologist to determine the etiology of her acne flare and the most appropriate therapy.

Sensitivity

I have sensitive skin and am unable to tolerate alpha hydroxy acid products or retinoids. My dermatologist has tried different formulations of Retin-A, Differin and even over-the-counter retinol products, but everything seems to irritate my skin. I have a lot of sun damage and blotchy pigmentation. Do you have any alternative recommendations for topical skin care?

A Kinetin-containing lotion may be an ideal alternative for you. Kinetin-containing lotions have been shown to improve skin texture, mottled pigmentation and fine wrinkling. Kinetin is a cytokinin plant growth regulator. This ingredient can be found in Kinerase cream and lotion. Almay also has a line of Kinetin containing creams.

Morning-after sun care

Is there anything you can do after you get a sunburn to prevent skin cancer?

Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory agents and specifically Cox-2 inhibitors (i.e., Celebrex) have been shown to decrease tumor formation in mice when given before, during or even after exposure to ultraviolet light. While not continues

approved for this indication, they may be helpful for prevention of skin cancer following sun exposure and possibly for chemoprevention of skin cancer in high-risk patients in the future.

Skin repellent

With the recent outbreaks of West Nile virus, there is a great concern about protection from mosquitoes. In your opinion, what is the best insect repellent?

The most widely used agent in insect repellents is DEET, but preparations containing citronella, oils of soybean, peppermint and eucalyptus are also available. In comparative studies, 23.8 percent DEET was the best agent offering the longest duration protection. Oil of eucalyptus fared second and the other agents were significantly less effective. Products that combine sunscreen with DEET lessen the mosquito repellent effect and should be avoided.

Cholesterol and balding

I saw my dermatologist about treatment of hair loss and he suggested that I check my cholesterol levels since there is an association of heart disease and baldness, especially in men with high cholesterol levels. Is this true?

Yes, there is a relationship between male pattern baldness and heart disease. In a published study, men with high cholesterol levels and vertex balding had a 300 percent greater risk of heart disease and those with hypertension and vertex balding had a 79 percent greater risk. Men with vertex balding alone had about a 30 percent increased risk of heart disease with the greatest risk in those with more severe vertex balding.

Reliable protection

How reliable is the sun protection factor (SPF) on a sunscreen product label?

The sun protection factor is a measure of the sunscreen's ability to protect against the UVB portion of the sun spectrum. The number is obtained in a laboratory setting using a standard formula (2 mg of sunscreen/cm of skin surface). Most people only apply 20 to 60 percent of the necessary volume of sunscreen, lessening the promised SPF of the sunscreen and providing a false sense of security. Furthermore, the number does not take into account the effect of sweating and water immersion. Users should therefore increase the quantity of sunscreen applied and reapply it every two hours and following water exposure. Approximately 35 ml of sunscreen is required to cover an average adult body. A half of teaspoon should be applied to each arm and to the head and neck area and a teaspoon should be applied to each leg and the front and back trunk for adequate coverage.

How to take antibiotics

My dermatologist prescribed tetracycline for treatment of my acne condition. My condition has not been improving and she says it is because I have been taking tetracycline along with iron supplements and my morning breakfast of yogurt and fruit. Is this possible?

Yes, concurrent administration of tetracycline and iron supplements can reduce tetracycline serum levels by up to 50 percent. Dairy products, antacids and zinc supplements have also been shown to decrease tetracycline serum levels. Administration of tetracycline with iron or zinc supplements, antacids or dairy products should be separated by two to three hours. ■

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