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# Dermatology Update

by Dr. Debra Price

## Questions and Answers

### Stress effects

*Is psoriasis related to stress?*

Psoriasis is a genetic disease that is exacerbated by stress. Stress-reducing activities such as physical exercise, breathing exercises, yoga, meditation and Tai Chi may be beneficial in lessening stress in predisposed individuals.

### After Accutane

*How long should you wait after you finish taking Accutane to become pregnant?*

You must continue to use two methods of birth control or abstinence to avoid pregnancy, during and for at least one month after discontinuing Accutane. Severe birth defects will develop in women who become pregnant while on Accutane or within one month of stopping Accutane.

### Melanoma frequency

*How common is melanoma in comparison to other skin cancers?*

Over one million new cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed in the United States this year. Melanoma accounts for only 4 percent of skin cancers, but it is responsible for 79 percent of deaths associated with skin cancer. Basal cell carcinoma is the most common skin cancer accounting for 80 percent of cases. Squamous cell carcinoma is responsible for 16 percent of skin cancers. Basal and squamous cell carcinoma have over a 95 percent plain cure

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*Melanoma accounts for only about 4 percent of skin cancers, but it is responsible for 79 percent of the deaths associated with skin cancer. Advise your clients to seek a physician to have any suspicious skin lesion checked.*

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rate if detected and treated early. Melanoma is the most rapidly increasing form of cancer in the United States. In 2002, one in 68 Americans has a lifetime risk of developing invasive melanoma. Melanoma is the fifth most common cancer in men and the sixth most common cancer in women. Lifetime protection from sun exposure through the daily use of sunscreens, sun protective clothing and avoidance of midday sun will lessen one's lifetime risk. Individuals should seek prompt evaluation of any new, irregularly pigmented, changed or symptomatic lesion.

### Microdermabrasion

*How effective is microdermabrasion as a skin rejuvenation technique?*

Although superficial, microdermabrasion does not cause a deep skin injury, studies have demonstrated improvements in skin texture, pigmentation irregularities and fine lines. Histologic studies in individuals who have undergone a series of

treatments have shown thickening of the epidermis, dilatation of blood vessels and increases in collagen deposition. It has been hypothesized that the vacuum pressure alone may be responsible for some of the clinical benefits achieved. Studies are currently underway to investigate this possibility.

### Remove it

*What is the most effective tattoo removal procedure and how much does it cost?*

The most effective tattoo removal procedure is laser. Certain colors such as black, blue and red are more easily removed than purple, orange, yellow and flesh tones. Sometimes it is not possible to achieve complete removal. Tattoo removal always requires multiple sessions and the costs are dependent on the size of the tattoo and the number of treatments required to maximally clear it. Laser sessions generally run between \$300 to \$800 per session and it is not uncommon to require 10 or more sessions to achieve maximal clearing.

### Besides Retin-A

*I am a fair complected individual with a history of a lot of sun exposure. Dermatologists in the past have recommended that I use Retin-A but my skin cannot tolerate it. Do you have any topical recommendations to improve my skin?*

*continues*

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A new, lower percentage (0.02 percent), less irritating formulation of Retin-A cream is now available for sensitive skin patients. Like higher percentage formulations, it improves fine wrinkling, coarse wrinkling and yellowing of the skin. Alternatively, other cream-based prescription retinoids such as Differin, and nonprescription retinal products are also less irritating. TNS Recovery Complex, contains a combination of growth factors that has been shown to improve photoaged skin. Some over-the-counter products, such as Olay Total Effects containing niacinamide can also improve aged and irregularly pigmented skin. ■

*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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