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Dermatology Update

by Dr. Debra Price

Questions and Answers

Accutane guidelines

I recently read that Accutane® is teratogenic and should not be used during pregnancy. Is this true?

Accutane® is a highly effective drug for the treatment of severe disfiguring acne, but it is highly teratogenic. Individuals taking this drug must absolutely avoid pregnancy during and for one month following treatment. This year, a new physician program SMART attempts to address this important issue by restricting prescription privileges to those physicians who have been fully trained in the safe prescription of Accutane® to females of childbearing age. Females prescribed Accutane® must use two methods of birth control for one month prior, during and for one month following usage. Patients must also have two negative pregnancy tests prior to beginning treatment and monthly thereafter during treatment.

Chin hair removal

What is a better option, laser hair removal, electrolysis, Vaniqa® or waxing for stubborn chin hairs?

All of the above. The best option for removal of unwanted hair depends on your skin type, hair color, financial situation and lifestyle. Laser hair removal is the most time-efficient method of long-lasting hair removal. The ideal laser depends on your skin type and hair color. White, grey or blonde hair

Supplemental hormone replacement therapy can improve skin elasticity and decrease skin laxity, but there are no approved topical hormone formulations for skin.

does not respond well to most lasers, but brown or black hair is highly responsive. Shorter wavelength lasers work better on lighter-skinned individuals and longer wavelength lasers work better in darker-skinned individuals. Laser hair removal would be my method of choice for hypertrichosis (increased hair) of brown or black hair. As always, success depends on choosing a physician who is experienced in laser hair removal. Electrolysis would be preferable in individuals with a few hairs or lighter hairs.

Vaniqa® decreases hair growth but does not remove hair. It is a useful adjunctive therapy with all methods of hair removal. Treatment should be withheld until completing a course of laser hair removal since its use may delay hair regrowth and not allow for complete laser hair removal of residual hairs on subsequent sessions. Waxing is a temporary solution for stubborn chin hair. It may be beneficial for individuals with blonde, grey or white hair or those unable to afford more long-lasting options. Combining it with Vaniqa® will enhance hair-free intervals.

Green tea benefits

I've been reading a lot about the benefits of green tea. Is it true that green tea can help prevent sunburn and skin cancer?

Topically applied green tea extracts have been shown to decrease sunburn. It may also aid in the prevention of sun-induced skin cancer, although this has not been proven. Combining topical green tea serum with the daily use of a broad spectrum sunscreen, avoidance of midday sun exposure, and protective clothing may enhance sun protection.

Rosacea or acne

How can you tell the difference between rosacea and acne?

This is probably one of the most important questions an esthetician needs to master since the distinction should direct one's choice of esthetic treatments, medical therapy and skin care. Rosacea is characterized by intermittent flushing, redness, telangiectasia, and sometimes sebaceous hyperplasia of the nose. Rosacea flares with heat, emotional upset, some foods, alcohol, drugs, and exercise. Comedones (blackheads and whiteheads) are not present.

Acne is a disease of the pilosebaceous follicle. Blackheads and whiteheads are prominent along with papules, pustules and cysts. Erythema is generally localized to inflammatory acne lesions. Telangiectasia are not prominent.

continues

Growth factors

What is the latest information regarding topical growth factors and aging of the skin?


Topical growth factors are one of the newest agents in our anti-aging armamentarium. They have been shown to stimulate collagen production, and repair photo-damaged skin. In early studies they improved skin texture in most patients and decreased wrinkling in about 60 percent of patients. They work by a different mechanism

than Retin-A®, vitamin C, and glycolic acid so it is likely that combining these agents will result in a synergistic effect, although this remains to be proven.

HRT and aging

Do you think hormone replacement therapy has any role in the treatment of aging skin?

Normal female hormones decline gradually with age prior to menopause. Supplemental hormone replacement therapy can improve skin elasticity and decrease skin laxity. Presently, there are no approved topical hormone formulations for aging skin, but continuing research in this area is likely to produce such formulations in the future. ■



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