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dermatology update

by Dr. Debra Price

Questions and Answers

Cystic acne

I have a client who has cystic acne on occasion. She will not use anything but tea tree on her cysts because her skin is so sensitive. I've tried to convince her to use a glycolic cleanser and moisturizer to help stop the breakouts, but she refuses. Meanwhile, she is still getting large cysts. What is the best treatment for rapidly getting rid of her cysts?

Unfortunately, there is no topical remedy for cystic acne. I recommend you refer your client to a dermatologist for prescription treatment. Cystic acne generally responds to oral antibiotic therapy, incision and drainage and intralesional Kenalog injections. Accutane therapy is indicated for cystic acne that is unresponsive to maximal alternative therapy.

Crow's-feet

Other than not smiling or squinting, what's the best way to stop and reverse crow's-feet?

The best way to stop crow's-feet is to use a sunscreen daily, avoid smoking and midday sun exposure. Topical use of anti-aging therapies such as Retin-A, Differin, Tazorac and retinol may be beneficial, but Botox is by far the best remedy. Botox relaxes the muscles that create crow's-feet wrinkles. In individuals with more significant photoaging, combining Botox with ablative or nonablative laser treatment can enhance and prolong the results.

Generic Accutane

I recently heard that Accutane now has a generic version. Is that true and if so what is it called?

The generic version of Accutane, Amnesteem earned FDA approval in November, 2002, for the treatment of severe recalcitrant nodular acne. Like Accutane, Amnesteem has a formal program called SPIRIT to ensure patients are educated about the teratogenicity and other possible side effects. Many dermatologists may be reluctant to prescribe the generic version until its clinical profile of side effects is established.

Tea tree and fungus

I heard that tea tree oil extract can treat fungal infections of the foot. What is your opinion about its ability to do so?

Tea tree oil can eradicate tinea pedis (fungal infection of the foot) in 50 percent of patients who apply a 25 percent concentration twice daily for four weeks. The cure rate is lower than prescription topical agents, but it may be valuable for patients who prefer to try a natural remedy first.

Hair wax

I have been using hair wax to style my hair and noticed that I have developed an acne condition on my forehead and sides of my cheeks. Do you think hair wax could be the culprit and if so what hair products do you recommend I substitute?

Hair wax can sometimes migrate onto the face and occlude follicles causing an acneiform outbreak. If you have experienced complexion problems since beginning hair wax use, you may want to consider switching to a sculpting gel.

Human collagen

I heard that a human form of collagen was recently approved. Is this true and if so what is it called? Do patients need a skin test prior to treatment like collagen?

Two human tissue derived forms of collagen, Cosmoderm and Cosmoplast recently received FDA approval. Unlike Zyderm and Zylplast collagen, these new collagen implants do not require allergy testing. The longevity of response appears to be equivalent to bovine-derived collagen. ■

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 her, please call (305) 670-1111.