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# medical | dermatology update



## Questions and Answers

### Yushchenko's skin

**Q:** What is the cystic acne condition Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko developed from dioxin poisoning?

**A:** Dioxin toxicity causes a characteristic type of acne called *chloracne*. This poisoning leads to cystic and nodular acne, which form lesions on the face and back. Unlike acne vulgaris, chloracne usually spares the nose. The physical effects can last for decades and can cause permanent scarring. The most common, systemic, acute, adverse effects of dioxin poisoning are liver damage, elevated triglycerides, low platelets, depression and hyperpigmentation.

### Pimple popping

**Q:** Is there a safe way to pop a pimple? Any tips?

**A:** Gentle extraction of a pustule is generally acceptable, but routine popping of pimples can lead to delayed healing and scarring. Individuals with active acne should find an experienced esthetician to perform extractions.

### Up in smoke

**Q:** Aside from the overexposure to the sun, what's the second most skin-damaging event that occurs?

**A:** Apart from sun exposure, smoking is the second most preventable cause of perioral skin aging. Individuals who smoke expose their skin to the collagen-damaging effects of cigarette smoke. Individuals who are concerned about the appearance of their skin should avoid smoking.

### Pop-a-tan

**Q:** What is your opinion of these new tanning pills?

**A:** There is no approved substance that can be taken orally to stimulate melanin production. How much and what kind of melanin you make is determined by your genetic makeup. Some individuals have darkened their skin with a pill that contains canthaxanthin. However, this substance is not approved in the United States and has been associated with liver side effects.

### Sun protection

**Q:** What can you tell me about Rit Sun Guard?

**A:** Rit Sun Guard is a laundry additive that contains Tinosorb. This ingredient can raise the UPF of clothing. The UPF is a measure of a fabric's ability to protect against ultraviolet exposure. In general,

lighter-colored, cotton fabrics afford the least protection. This additive does not change the color or quality of the fabric and is invisible and odorless. It is a useful means of providing added sun protection for individuals who live in sunny climates and prefer light cotton clothing rather than darker polyester options. This additive also allows individuals a wider range of clothing options as compared to solar protective lines such as Solumbra.

*Oral contraceptives are an effective adjunctive therapy for the treatment of acne, but are generally not adequate as the sole form of therapy.*

### Rosacea treatments

**Q:** Have you heard of any new treatments for rosacea?

**A:** Periostat is a new, low-dose, oral antibiotic that has been shown to be effective against rosacea. Patients do not experience the adverse side effects associated with conventional antibiotic therapy, such as gastrointestinal upset and sun sensitivity, and its long-term use should not cause bacterial resistance. The treatment has been shown to decrease lesion counts and redness. Rosaliac—a new, green-tinted moisturizer that contains xanthine and vitamin CG—decreases redness in rosacea patients.



### Anti-aging ingredient

**Q:** What is your opinion of niacinamide as an anti-aging ingredient?

**A:** Topical niacinamide has been shown to decrease skin sallowness (yellowing), improve skin texture, the appearance of fine lines and red blotchiness.

### Pedi woes

**Q:** I've heard that if you get pedicures often, your skin actually gets tougher quicker. Is this true?

**A:** The removal of the thickened, dead skin layer during a pedicure does not change one's tendency to develop callouses. The development of calloused heels is a response to repetitive trauma. Use of a salicylic or urea-based cream in between pedicures and wearing good-fitting shoes can lessen skin thickening.

### Psoriasis developments

**Q:** Are there any new advances in the treatment of psoriasis?

**A:** The new, biologic therapies are the most recent advances in the treatment of psoriasis. Currently, there are three FDA-approved agents for the treatment of psoriasis: Embrel, Amevive and Raptiva. Humira and Remicade are being studied for approval. Embrel is the most efficacious of the currently approved agents.

### Diagnosing rosacea

**Q:** In your opinion is rosacea over-diagnosed and incorrectly diagnosed? Why does this happen?

**A:** Rosacea is often correctly diagnosed by experienced dermatologists, but patients with sun-induced telangiectasia and acne, and sensitive skin and lupus can sometimes be incorrectly diagnosed with rosacea. Rosacea is a disease with a spectrum of characteristic findings, which include erythema, telangiectasis, papules, pustules and, in some cases, sebaceous hyperplasia. Because the diagnosis is distressing to many, we should be careful to ascribe its diagnosis correctly.

### At-home scar reduction

**Q:** What is the best home therapy to make a resulting scar almost nonexistent?

**A:** Unfortunately, there is no home remedy to eliminate scars. V-beam laser remains the best modality to improve the appearance of erythematous and early scars. Hypertrophic or elevated scars are best treated with V-beam laser and intralesional steroid injections. Silicone gel dressings, Mederma (an over-the-counter product) or occlusions may ameliorate elevated scars. If a scar has already widened, re-excision often provides the best therapeutic solution.

### Birth control for acne

**Q:** How effective are birth control pills as a treatment for acne?

**A:** Oral contraceptives are an effective, adjunctive therapy for the treatment of acne, but are generally not adequate as the sole form of therapy. Ortho Tri-Cyclen and Estrostep are FDA-approved for the treatment of acne. In a recent study, Yasmin was shown to be more effective than Ortho Tri-Cyclen in reducing the number of acne lesions, but it is not FDA-approved for this indication. The relative risk of breast cancer and stroke is higher in oral-contraceptive users. ■

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