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medical dermatology update

Questions and Answers

Seasonal savvy

Q: In your opinion, when is the best time to have laser rejuvenation? Winter, spring, summer or fall?

A: Ablative laser rejuvenation is best performed during the winter because it decreases the possibility of sun exposure and hyperpigmentation. However, patients who are compliant with sun avoidance can undergo laser rejuvenation at any time during the year.

Tag, you're it

Q: How do you get rid of skin tags? What are they and how do they form?

A: Skin tags are benign, exophytic growths that develop most commonly on the neck and underarm region. Scissor excision is used to remove them.

Prevage on the market

Q: What can you tell me about Prevage made by Allergan?

A: Prevage is idebenone, a new antioxidant cream. In studies, it has been shown to be more effective than vitamins C and E, coenzyme Q10, kinetin and alpha lipoic acid in protecting against environ-

mental stresses. Prevage also interferes with the production of enzymes that breakdown collagen and elastin. It has also been shown to decrease skin dryness and the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

Good ingredients

Q: What cosmeceutical ingredients do you recommend?

A: Topical vitamin B3 (niacinamide) is an anti-inflammatory agent and an exfoliant and B5 (panthenol) is a humectant that decreases skin dryness. Amino peptides such as Pal-KTTKS have been shown to stimulate collagen production. Soy can increase skin thickness and improve blotchy pigmentation. Green tea is another anti-inflammatory agent that may offer some protection against UV exposure.

Bikini-line folliculitis can be treated with topical antibiotics and agents that lessen ingrown hairs such as Differin cream or Retin-A.

Breast and skin cancer link

Q: I recently heard about an association between breast cancer and melanoma? Is this link real and if so, what is the relationship?

A: The relationship is real and applies to both breast cancer and melanoma patients alike. Patients with a history of melanoma have an 11 percent increased risk of developing



breast cancer. Survivors of breast cancer have a 16 percent increased risk of developing melanoma. The risk is higher in those treated with radiation therapy under 50 years of age.

Up in smoke

Q: What is your opinion of the effect of smoking on the skin?

A: Smoking is associated with early aging and wrinkling of the skin, poor wound healing, comedonal acne, psoriasis, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. Heavy smokers are 4.7 times more likely to
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have wrinkles, independent of sun exposure. In addition, smoking and sun exposure have a synergistic effect on skin aging and wrinkling.

Stubble trouble

Q: I suffer from chronic folliculitis in the bikini area. It is so bad that I am embarrassed to wear a bathing suit because of the marks. Do you have any recommendations that can help me?

A: Bikini-line folliculitis is a common problem that can be treated with topical antibiotics and agents that lessen ingrown hairs such as Differin cream or Retin-A. Vaniqa is another topical prescription remedy that can decrease or slow hair growth, lessening folliculitis. Individuals susceptible to bikini-line folliculitis should moisten the area with warm water and liberally apply a shaving gel to the skin for three to four minutes before shaving. It is also advisable to use a sharp, disposable blade to shave daily and to avoid applying too much pressure to the area when shaving. Those with a persistent problem should consider laser hair removal.

Disappearing brows

Q: Why is it that women seem to lose their eyebrows as they get older?

A: Overtweezing the eyebrows can lead to loss of eyebrows as a person ages. Each time a hair is tweezed, there is a potential for injury to the hair follicle. This tendency, along with a natural tendency for the eyebrow hair to thin with advancing age, can lead to thin eyebrows. You should avoid tweezing hairs above the eyebrow and only tweeze stray hairs below the eyebrows to lessen the possibility of thinning in later years.

Battle the bulge

Q: Do you know the best way to tighten tummy skin after pregnancy?

A: Unfortunately, stomach laxity following pregnancy is multifactorial in nature, involving muscle as well as skin laxity. Women who do have persistent laxity following pregnancy, despite exercise, may be candidates for abdominoplasty.

Get your fill

Q: There is a lot of talk about fillers. Do you know if there is a permanent filler without side effects?

A: Both permanent and temporary fillers have potential side effects. Both can cause temporary redness or swelling. Other potential side effects include discoloration, acne breakouts, infection, allergic reaction or temporary bumps. More serious and potentially lasting side effects such as an ulceration, sores, persistent nodule or scarring are rare. The potential for long-lasting or permanent side effects is increased with permanent or longer-lasting fillers. ■

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