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medical dermatology update

Questions and Answers

Red mole

Q: Is a red mole something to worry about?

A: Red, elevated growths called angiomas are benign lesions that increase in number with age and during pregnancy. These vascular growths do not contain mole cells and do not have a tendency to become cancerous.

Skin color and birth control

Q: Is there any way to correct hyperpigmentation that's a result of birth control?

A: The combination of topical prescription and nonprescription remedies, meticulous sun protection, peels and the latest FDA-approved therapy and Fraxel laser, are most effective methods in ameliorating hyperpigmentation that's resulted from birth control pills. Patients who apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen daily and who are willing to discontinue birth control pills, are likely to see a more rapid and sustained response to therapy.

Spot check

Q: What ingredients are most likely to reduce brown spots?

A: The most effective lightening ingredients include hydroquinone, azelaic acid, kojic acid,

arbutin, mulberry or bearberry extract, vitamin C and retinoids.

Everlasting makeup

Q: How long does permanent makeup really last before you need a touch up?

A: The duration of permanent makeup is variable, but most individuals will note significant fading that will require a touch-up treatment within five years.

There are many treatments that will help lighten freckles including topical therapies with the Fraxel laser, peels or retinoids.

Tattoo snafu

Q: I've heard that certain tattoo colors can interfere with an MRI. Is this true? And, if so, what colors are the ones that cause the interference?

A: There have been reports of people with tattoos or permanent makeup who experienced swelling or burning in the affected areas when they underwent magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). Some have theorized that these complications result from an interaction with the metallic components of some



pigments, especially iron oxide. There also have been some reports of permanent eyeliner interfering with the quality of the MRI image of the eyes. Individuals who have tattoos or permanent makeup should inform the radiologist before undergoing an MRI.

Safe, self-tanning

Q: Is it safe to put self-tanner all over the body or are there areas that you should stay away from?

A: Self-tanning lotions are safe to use in all areas but tend to cause an exaggerated darkening in the areas of thickened stratum corneum such as elbows, knees and heels. These areas should be exfoliated prior to treatment. Applying moisturizer over these areas to dilute the effect is also recommended. When applying these lotions it is also advisable to avoid application in the eyes or mouth. Individuals who

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Hemangiomas or elevated strawberry growths often enlarge in the first year of life and then regress spontaneously in childhood.

apply these lotions via a spray technique should also avoid breathing in the aerosol.

Fade freckles

Q: One of my clients always frets about her freckles. Is there a permanent way to get rid of them?

A: There are many treatments to lighten freckles, which include topical therapies such as retinoids, peels and Fraxel laser. Fraxel laser is an innovative laser therapy that works through the creation of microscopic injuries in the skin, which gradually eliminate pigment. Patients require three to five treatment sessions for optimal improvement. Individuals who practice conscientious sun protection following these effective treatments can see an lasting improvement in their blotchy pigmentation and freckling.

Unsightly birthmarks

Q: I've noticed that some babies are born with or develop red birthmarks. Can lasers correct these skin defects completely?

A: Laser treatment can often ameliorate vascular birthmarks. However, complete resolution is not always possible. Flat, red lesions on the face and trunk, known as port-wine stains, tend to darken and elevate over time. Early treatment can often improve existing lesions and lessen their progression. Hemangiomas or elevated strawberry growths often enlarge in the first year of life and then regress spontaneously in childhood. Early laser treatment of rapidly growing lesions or lesions obstructing vital functions can sometimes halt the progression of these lesions. ■

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