

STATE OF THE ART SKIN CARE

Patients frequently ask me about the latest techniques to keep their skin looking young and free of blemishes. Among the most common concerns are fine lines and pigment changes on the face. We now know that such changes in addition to skin cancer are strongly related to chronic sun exposure, especially in those patients who burn easily and/or have fair skin. Many sun induced changes are subtle, accumulating quietly without being noticed until years later. Despite the fact that we cannot turn back the clock of years of exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays, there are proactive measures and treatments that can offer help to reduce the effects of sun damage on the skin. The first step is to use a daily moisturizer product that contains sun protection each and every morning even if you will not be going outside. There are many products that are available in supermarkets, pharmacies, and the makeup counters of department stores. Such products include Neutrogena, Purpose, Cetaphil, Clinique, and Estee Lauder. Some of these products also contain an alpha-hydroxy acid which by itself may produce improvement in the texture of your skin. These sunscreen moisturizer products improve the overall condition of facial skin and the sun protection will prevent further damage. When such a product is started, it is best to be used by itself for a short time to make sure that it is well tolerated and does not produce a rash or has an unpleasant feeling on your skin.

Using the sunscreen moisturizer product in the morning does not limit the use of your regular cosmetic routine. It is perfectly acceptable to use products such as a foundation or powder over these products. In general, it is better to keep the system simple in terms of a mild cleanser, your sunscreen moisturizer, and the makeup of your choosing. Most brand name makeups do not cause problems with the skin such as clogged pores and acne.

After the first step of using the sunscreen moisturizer product in the morning, the next step is the addition of a topical retinoid product to be used at bedtime. You may have heard of products such as Retin-A or Renova. These are derived from vitamin A and work to improve wrinkling and pigment changes in the skin. There is also a chance that these products may slow or prevent the progression of sun induced growths and skin cancers.

Retin-A, Renova, and other similar products can be slightly drying or irritating on the skin especially when they are first started. Therefore, it is best to start the cream I prescribe for you by using it sparingly every two or three days. As you learn how your skin responds to the cream, you should be able to slowly increase the use and hopefully use the product each night. The cream should be applied at bedtime to your entire face and not just to individual spots. The cream can be cautiously applied close to the eye. If some would get in the eyes, it may cause local irritation but it is not dangerous. Since the product is applied at night, it is best not to use any other cream over the top. Retinoids are safe for use over many years and the strengths and the dose of the cream prescribed will be determined in the office based on your individual skin. As your skin becomes used to the cream we may be able to increase the strength to improve the beneficial effect.

Again the state-of-the-art for skin care is to use a sunscreen/moisturizer in the morning and a retinoid product such as Retin-A or Renova at night. While not a miracle cure, with the use of these treatments you can expect to see improvements in the overall texture and appearance of your skin. If you have any other questions about these medications, please ask me before you leave the office.