



Understanding the Elements of Good Skincare

Part 2

by Lisa Hogan, MD

As discussed in last month's article, no element of our health exists in isolation. Skin health optimization does not occur separately from all other lifestyle decisions—nutrition, exercise, weight maintenance and stress reduction are all equally essential. Nonetheless, a good skincare regimen can work wonders for most, regardless of age. While it may sound like a lot of effort, taking a few moments twice daily to improve your skin and adding an office procedure once a month will result in healthier, younger looking skin. Your skin will have fewer lines and will be tighter and smoother; the pigment variations will be improved and your skin will have a new luminescence (glow). There are three elements of good skincare that everyone can incorporate into their daily routine. They are Sun Protection, Exfoliation and Collagen Stimulation.

Sun Protection

This is an absolute must if you are serious about maintaining healthy skin. It means using a sunscreen every day – however, sunscreen is only meant to protect you for brief periods of time, such as walking from your house to your car. When you are spending a longer time outdoors (walking, gardening, attending a sports event, etc.) you need to cover your skin with protective clothing and provide your own shelter in the form of a large-brimmed hat or parasol (a baseball cap is not good enough—it only shades about 25% of your head and neck and exposes your

vulnerable ears). The argument usually given in favor of sun exposure is the need for vitamin D. Vitamin D is produced in the skin in UV light and behaves as a vital hormone. Unfortunately, you cannot get enough sun exposure to create adequate amounts of Vitamin D in your system without damaging your skin. It is best to simply take your Vitamin D3 as a supplement and avoid the damaging rays of the sun.

Exfoliation

This is a term given to the act of removing the outer layer of coarse, dead skin cells, and can be done mechanically or chemically. Mechanical exfoliation is performed by abrading the surface of the skin in a gentle manner. Methods of mechanical exfoliation include washing with a loofah or buffing pad, washing with scrubbing granules, or using a microdermabrasion device. Chemical exfoliation is performed by applying an agent that loosens and removes the surface skin cells. Alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs) are commonly used for exfoliation. All AHAs are derived from natural substances such as fruit, nuts, or milk.

Whatever method of exfoliation is used, the result is that the gentle removal of the outer layer of skin cells stimulates the creation of new, fresh skin cells in the deeper layers of the skin. There is an increase in skin cell turnover, so that more new skin cells are coming to the surface, and new skin cells are better at making collagen and glycosaminoglycans, and are better at protecting you from damaging UV rays. In fact, regular exfoliation can

decrease your risk of skin cancer.

Collagen Stimulation

As previously noted, some of the more undesirable changes of aging in the skin involve a decrease in the amount of collagen produced by the skin. Therefore, when addressing fine lines and wrinkles, enlarged pores, and sagging or draping of the skin it is all about the collagen. Regular exfoliation will influence collagen production, but we can do better. Young people can get by with a low-level collagen stimulator for maintenance and prevention such as vitamin C serum. Vitamin C applied to the skin has been shown to prevent skin cancer. Look for a vitamin C that is stable, penetrating and absorbable, such as ascorbate THD. The most powerful of the collagen-stimulating topical compounds are the retinoids, or molecules related to Vitamin A. The retinoids do many good things for the skin: they reverse sun damage, stimulate collagen production, are anti-aging and anti-acne, and carry other products deeper into the skin.

Taking a few moments to improve your skin twice daily and maybe even adding an office procedure once a month is well worth the effort and will result in skin that is healthier and skin that looks healthier. Your skin will have fewer lines and will be tighter and smoother, the pigment variations will be improved and your skin will have a new luminescence or glow.

For more information, contact Lisa Hogan, MD at Youthologie Aesthetic & Anti-Aging Medicine. Phone 919-847-1495 or visit www.youthologie.md. See ad on page 11.