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ISSUE 4 • 2018 • US \$2.95



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AM I DOING THE RIGHT THING FOR MY SKIN?

DEBUNKING THE MYTHS AROUND SKINCARE



Truth or fiction? There's a lot of advice floating around about how to keep our skin looking healthy and youthful, but how can we tell the difference between facts and myths? We asked MACO columnist and board-certified dermatologist, Dr Naomi Dolly, to help bring some sense to the conversation.

1 Sunscreen should only be used when you go to the beach.

Myth. Once we're living in this place of sea and sunshine, we will always be exposed to the sun. We need to protect ourselves from it daily, even on the days when we aren't spending time at the beach. Reapplication is also necessary, as the effect of sunscreen only lasts so long. I recommend additional forms of protection, such as sun-protective hats and clothing, to keep the harmful rays of sun at bay.

2 Scrubbing your face with soap will keep your skin healthy and acne free.

Myth. When you scrub your face, you're taking off some of the protective oils and barriers, which tends to lead to dry skin that's more sensitive and prone to irritation, rashes and even burns. Instead of soap, use a gentle cleanser, followed by a moisturiser or sunscreen. This is especially true after a chemical peel, where scrubbing the face can actually do more harm than good.

3 It's better to get the pus out of a pimple by popping it.

Myth. Though it might seem tempting, popping pimples can lead to more risk of scarring and hyperpigmentation (dark appearance of the skin affected). Additionally, many pimples actually don't contain pus or fluid. Popping or manipulating them in any way can cause trauma to the skin and further worsen its long-term appearance. Best to schedule an appointment with a board-certified dermatologist who can assist in assessing your problems with acne and recommending the appropriate treatment.

4 Eating pineapples and papaya helps bruising associated with dermal fillers and neurotoxins (Botox).

Fact. Pineapples are rich in an enzyme called bromelain, and papayas (paw-paws) in an enzyme called papain. These enzymes have both digestive and anti-inflammatory effects. This helps with reducing bruising and swelling. They are sometimes made into supplements that are taken orally. I sometimes recommend eating foods rich in these enzymes prior to procedures such as the introduction of dermal fillers or Botox, to decrease the associated risk of bruising and swelling.

5 Botox and other neurotoxins can prevent wrinkles.

Fact. Theoretically, yes. But no long-term studies support this claim. I recommend them for patients who have a strong familial history of wrinkles that appear early in life. There are other strategies for fending off wrinkles, like using sunscreen and keeping up proper skincare, and using vitamin A derivatives, which are more reliable and certainly less expensive options. Beginning Botox/neurotoxin treatments no earlier than when fine lines first appear, generally in your 20s or 30s, gives the best chance of preventing wrinkles. This approach means lower doses are likely to be used, leading to a less frozen look to the face and less chance of weak muscles and thin skin in the long run.

6 Oily skin does not need moisturiser.

Myth. Hydrated skin is healthy skin, and dehydrated skin can lead to issues like inflammation—a cause of premature skin aging—and even breakouts. Hydration is a measure of the water content of the skin and not the amount of oil. In fact, when your skin becomes dry, your body responds by making more oil—and this extra oil can clog pores, leading to more pimples.

Moisturisers work by adding hydration or helping to “seal off” the water already present in the skin, thereby leaving skin supple. Always remember: just because your skin has a lot of oil doesn't mean it has enough water. I recommend finding the right moisturiser to suit your skin, as oily vs dry skin might require moisturisers of different textures. Moisturisers don't have to be greasy. Look for moisturisers that have glycerine, hyaluronic acid, or aloe. These tend to be lighter and less likely to clog the pores, trapping more oil.

7 Cellulite can be cured.

Myth. No cellulite fix is permanent. Some treatments, such as creams that contain aminophylline (which helps break down fat cells), might minimize the look of cellulite. Cellulite has multiple causes, but the presence of vertical bands under the skin seems to be the most common culprit.

There are energy-based devices (such as VelaShape III from Syneron-Candela) that are thought to break these bands, as well as conventional subcision (a procedure in which bands are broken up using a needle or sharp instrument). But these remedies last, at best, a few months. The cost of these treatments needs to be weighed against benefits, as any treatment for cellulite needs constant maintenance, even with the best of results.

8 Laser hair removal has no effect on grey or red hairs.

Fact. Though laser hair removal offers up to 80% permanent hair reduction, this is only true for black or dark hairs. The process of laser hair removal targets the melanin pigment. Patients with grey or red hairs lack enough of this pigment in their hair follicles to have them targeted by the pulse of the laser. As a result, if you have grey hairs in your beard area, laser hair removal might leave you without dark hairs but with prominent greys that might still need removal via electrolysis or waxing.

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