

REVERSING Summer Skin Damage

GETTING YOUR SKIN READY FOR FALL

by Dr. Margo Weishar



Fall is here- the leaves are turning and the days are shorter. All of a sudden you notice that the tan and summer glow are starting to fade and you are left with new brown marks, dull lifeless skin and maybe a new line or two. Fall is a great time for the three R's: Rethink, Reassess, and Repair.

Fall and winter bring new challenges to skin care. The most important factor to consider is dryness. During the summer, especially in the Delaware Valley, there is a great deal of humidity in the air, which keeps our skin moist. As the weather gets colder and the heat is turned on, the humidity inside can drop to desert conditions. This can lead to dull, dry looking, pale winter skin. Rethinking your skin regimen may involve using a milder, less stripping soap, one that doesn't leave your skin "squeaky-clean." Adding a product to help exfoliate the outer layer of skin with an Alphahydroxy acid such as glycolic or lactic acid is helpful. These compounds help dissolve the "glue" that holds the cells together allowing them to be easily removed when the skin is cleansed. It is important to add moisture back to the skin. Depending on the level of dryness, moisturizing the skin can be done with a lotion, cream or ointment in increasing effectiveness. Usually for the face a lighter preparation such as a lotion is preferable but for tougher areas of the skin such as elbows, feet, and hands a richer product is necessary. Moisturizers containing silicone, hyaluronic acid and kinetin help to keep the skin supple without causing the skin to break out.

No matter how well you have tried to protect your skin against the sun it is time to reassess the damage- the skin may take on a rough texture, brown pigmentation may appear as the tan fades, which can make your skin look sallow. Sun can cause the appearance of new broken blood vessels or "spiders" on the face. Brown spots from the sun may appear, as well as new lines.

A dermatologist can recommend a treatment program to help repair these changes. There are many in-office procedures that offer minimum downtime and substantial improvement over these conditions. Brown discoloration can be treated with topical agents such as retinol or tretinoin, and a prescription strength bleaching. Lasers work best on the large discolored "freckles" that dermatologists call lentigos, but have been called age spots or liver spots (even though they have nothing

to do with the liver!). Patchy brown pigmentation on the cheeks, forehead and sometimes around the mouth called melasma can be treated with peels and bleaching agents. Uneven complexions with visible red blood vessels and brown discoloration can be treated by intense pulsed light treatments. And there are many new options for long lasting filling of new lines around the mouth and eyes.

The drier weather can lead to more difficulty tolerating drying products for acne and treatment may need to be adjusted accordingly. This is the also time of year when eczema sufferers start to flare. Eczema can be greatly improved by the liberal use of body moisturizers to be applied as soon as the person comes out of the bath to trap the moisture in the skin. For those with sensitive skin, moisturizers should be fragrance free. Keratosis Pilaris- or those little annoying bumps that about 50% of people have on their upper arms can be more prominent in the dry weather. A good AHA overnight moisturizer and an exfoliating scrub can help keep that in check during winter months.

Some patients suffer from winter itch. A moisturizer containing menthol is available over the counter that can both treat the dry skin and soothe the itch by its cooling sensation.

Of course those who wish to keep their summer glow have options to do that safely with self-tanners either home administered or done at a salon and bronzers. Although self-tanners are safe they do not give any sun protection and sunscreen still must be worn for any vacations to sunny climates. They work by causing a color change in the outermost layer of the skin so to keep it even for as long as possible start by exfoliating the area, moisturize and apply the product carefully to avoid streaking. Wash your hands well or wear gloves to avoid the dreaded self-tanner palms.



Dr. Margo Weishar, Springhouse Dermatology, 909 Sumneytown Pike Suite 204 Springhouse, PA (215 542-0655). Dr. Weishar is also an assistant professor in the department of dermatology at the University of Pennsylvania and shares her expertise monthly as a guest on CNB's Your Morning where she addresses a wide array of topics related to dermatology. Contact MargoWeishar@phillyfitmagazine.com