

Changes in estrogen levels that occur with menopause have direct effects on the skin. A drop in these levels causes dryness and thinning. A decrease in the supportive tissue, collagen, is responsible for wrinkles and diminished tone. While we can't turn back time, Dr. Pollard offers some treatments that are helpful in the care of the skin.

— Beverly Vaughn, MD, Medical Coordinator
of the “Menopause and You” Program



Emily Pollard, MD

Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon
Lankenau Hospital

Your skin is considered your largest organ, covering about 20 square feet and weighing about 6 pounds. Skin is unbelievably complex, performing many functions from keeping disease-causing organisms out of the body and protecting against injury to regulating body temperature and sensation.

Your skin's health and appearance can be affected by many factors, including age, grooming, eating habits, climate, family history, and ethnicity. With all that your skin does, and all the conditions that can affect it, it's no wonder you need to take good care of it!

Soothing Dry Skin

Dry skin is a common problem. When bathing, avoid long hot baths, which can strip away natural oils. Consider using a moisturizing body wash, pat your skin almost dry, and then apply moisturizers while skin is still damp. Drink plenty of water. Use moisturizers containing petrolatum, mineral oil, shea butter, ceramides, dimethicone, or glycerine. Properly moisturized skin is less likely to crack and become irritated.

Avoiding Ultraviolet Rays

Protect your skin from ultraviolet rays. UVA and UVB rays are known to cause premature aging wrinkles, irregular pigmentation, and of course skin cancer. All sunscreens are labeled with an SPF or sun protection factor. Use the rule of ten when using a sunscreen. Multiply the SPF by 10 to calculate the minutes of protection the sunscreen offers. Sunscreens should be applied 30 minutes prior to sun exposure. This allows the active agents to bind to your skin.

Common ingredients in sunscreens are PABA or paraaminobenzoic acid, anthranilate, or zinc oxide. In July of 2006, the FDA approved Mexoryl SX (Ecamsule) for sale in the United States. This product has been sold in Europe and Canada for more than 10 years and it does a better job of blocking UVA rays than other sunscreens in the market.

Effects of Free-radical Damage

Free-radical damage can cause deterioration of the skin support structures - decreasing elasticity and resilience. Free radicals are damaging by-products created by environmental stressors like UV light, air pollution, ozone and the sun during normal cell metabolism. Antioxidants are supposed to help by either stopping new damage or reversing earlier damage caused by free-radicals. The presence of antioxidants in the diet and possibly the topical application of antioxidants and skin care products play a part in slowing down free-radical damage. Antioxidants are ingredients such as vitamins C, and E.

Rejuvenation Treatments

As skin matures, the skin becomes thinner, mottled and appears rough and dull. There are many treatments that can help with this problem.

This is intended as an information resource providing guidelines for women. As always, check with your own healthcare practitioner with your specific concerns and questions.

Continued >>

“Your skin’s health and appearance can be affected by many factors, including age, grooming, eating habits, climate, family history, and ethnicity.”

Retina-A®, Renova®, and Tazarotene

Retina-A®, Renova®, and Tazarotene (Avage® or Tazorac®) are the gold standards in treating fine wrinkles, irregular pigmentation, and rough, sun damaged skin. All three of these products cause the skin to shed its dead outermost layer, accelerate skin regeneration and to thicken collagen. These actions help to replace the outer flat dry cells with new or healthier ones from underneath. It takes at least 6 months to see a noticeable difference in wrinkles. The best benefit is seen if they are used for at least a year. These are potent chemicals and should be used under the supervision of a physician.

Dermal Fillers

Many of the cracks and crevices in the face can be smoothed with products that are called dermal fillers. Most dermal fillers are long lasting but not permanent and are usually contain either collagen or hyaluronic acid. Hyaluronic acid is natural component of our bodies. When fillers are injected into the skin, they provide volume and fullness. The lines from the nose to the mouth or mouth to chin can be treated. Fillers are also good for treating thin lips, building the lip border (lipstick line) decreasing the appearance of a downturned mouth. Semi-permanent fillers, such as Radiesse®, Sculptra® and Juvederm® can be used in larger volume corrections, such as sunken cheeks or flattened eyebrows.

Botox®

Expression-related creases can be softened by the administration of Botox®. Botox® administered properly, can weaken the frown and scowl muscles of the face, thus allowing the uplifting muscles of the face to give the face a more relaxed, serene look. Frown lines between the eyebrows, on the forehead and around the mouth and neck can be treated. The effects usually become evident in three to five days and can last up to four months. This is a medical treatment that should be administered under the direction of a physician in a proper and professional setting.

As you have just read, there are simple steps you can take everyday to protect your skin from exposure to the hazards of everyday life. While it is important to properly moisturize and protect your skin to prevent damage, it is also important to discuss individual concerns with your physician and to seek consultation before beginning treatment.

Women's
HEALTH SOURCE

Bryn Mawr Hospital
Lankenau Hospital
Paoli Hospital

Main Line Health

This article is part of our Menopause and You library, a web-based program sponsored by Women’s Health Source. To view the entire library of articles, visit www.mainlinehealth.org/whs and click on the “Menopause and You” link. To speak with our nurse counselor, call 1-888-876-8764 or email whs@mlhs.org.

Sponsored by Women’s Health Source.