



Skin care products that contain feverfew can help calm irritation caused by conditions like acne, rosacea, and eczema

Cy-Fair Skin Care 101

Proactive Tips for Healthy Skin at Every Age

Written by Laura McSwain

Everyone knows the importance of first impressions, but for those suffering with uncooperative skin, feeling confident about your appearance sometimes seems like an exercise in futility. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, there are many different skin conditions that can affect those of all ages. Fortunately, many of these problematic skin conditions can be successfully treated with a dermatologist's intervention.

Common Skin Issues

Dr. Tricia Brown, a local dermatologist for many Cy-Fair residents, specializes in the care and treatment of patients who have concerns about certain skin issues. Eczema, rosacea, and acne are just a few of the most common skin problems she sees affecting a broad range of age groups. Varying hormone levels are one of the main causes of acne in teens and adults. "In teens and adult women, acne is always a common issue because of hormones," she adds.

Relief may often be found with various over-the-counter treatments. "Dove, Aveeno, Eucerine, and Clinique have some great over-the-counter products," says Dr. Brown. Some of these products even contain the active ingredient feverfew, an herb that may help calm the skin due to its natural anti-inflammatory properties.

The Threat of Sun Exposure

Sun exposure is another important issue facing all ages because of the threat of skin cancer from overexposure to harmful ultraviolet light. Cy-Fair resident, Dorothy Long, has first-hand experience with the damage that ultraviolet radiation from the sun can cause. Long, who is 84 years old, was first diagnosed with a condition called actinic keratosis when she was just 23. Actinic keratosis is a condition that commonly causes rough patches or lesions to form on the skin after repeated exposure to ultraviolet light.

"When I was first diagnosed, I lived in Florida and we went to the beach a lot," says Long. "We just didn't know to wear sunscreen then like we do now." Long repeatedly visits the doctor to have these hard patches of skin removed by a relatively quick and painless freezing process. "It doesn't take long to freeze them off, and it's like removing a wart," she says. Recently, she has undergone treatment for melanoma, and had a malignant mole surgically

removed from her leg. "I had a mole that looked like it was infected, so I went to the doctor and he told me he would have to remove it. I have a small scar now where they took it off," she says.

Long does not let her experience with skin cancer keep her from participating in outdoor activities, though. In order to protect herself from future occurrences, she wears a waterproof, SPF 70, sunscreen daily and when she plans to be outside longer than usual, she wears a sun-visor or hat to protect her face. "Any time I go outside, I wear a long-sleeve shirt because it helps protect my arms, too," Long says. "I'm 84, and I'm glad to be alive and able to keep doing what I enjoy."

Summer Skin Safety

During the summer months, many Cy-Fairians will be spending more time outdoors than usual. In times of increased sun exposure, it is crucial to properly protect your skin from the sun's damaging rays, which can cause premature aging and cancer. One of the most important things you can do to protect your skin this summer, as well as the rest of the year, is to apply sunscreen daily. "In the morning, apply an SPF 30 sunscreen to all exposed skin, such as your face, neck, and hands," says Dr. Brown.

Also, if you plan to be out in the sun for longer durations than usual, you should apply a waterproof sunscreen that is SPF 30 or higher, and you should reapply often. "A general rule of thumb is that the higher the SPF is, the stickier a sunscreen will be," Dr. Brown says. The American Academy of Dermatology also recommends that sunscreen should be applied at least 15 to 30 minutes before going outside, and at least every two hours after swimming or sweating heavily. Research has shown that even on overcast days, as much as 80% of the sun's rays are still able to reach skin through the clouds.

Proactive Prevention

In order to have healthy skin, there are some preventative steps that people can take to take charge of their skin health. Recently, medical research has taken an increased interest in the role of diet in regard to skin health. Dr. Brown says that numerous studies are



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Moisturizer with sunscreen can help guard your skin from the sun's damaging rays, while providing important nutrients

being conducted concerning the relationship between nutrition and skin health, and there appears to be a strong connection between the two factors. "Diet certainly has a huge impact on the health of your skin, especially an overall healthy diet that includes daily servings of fruits and vegetables," she says.

Research has indicated that the lycopene found in tomato paste may offer extra sun-protection, and fish oil may even alleviate the symptoms of eczema. Also, a study researching the correlation between nutrition and healthy skin found that some acne patients who followed the South Beach diet experienced skin-clearing results similar to patients taking antibiotics for the same condition.

By taking care of yourself and making a few proactive changes in your life, it is possible to have the beautiful skin you have always dreamed of. **CFM**

LAURA MCSWAIN is a freelance writer and visual artist, who has lived in the Cy-Fair area for 15 years.

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-Dr. Tricia Brown



See a Dermatologist when...



- 1.** Over-the-counter products fail to alleviate skin symptoms
- 2.** You have a skin lesion that does not heal properly
- 3.** You notice a change in the color, shape, or size of a mole
- 4.** Your skin condition interferes with your life

- Adapted from the American Academy of Dermatology's website, aad.org

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