

# Pearls of Wisdom for Treating Winter Skin

As we hit the heart of winter in many parts of the country, patients are flooding our offices with skin complaints. At Mount Sinai, we just concluded our best ever Annual Winter Symposium attended by over 450 dermatologists who learned pearls of wisdom from the best thought leaders in medical and cosmetic dermatology. Here are some insightful pearls I've learned recently.

- Winter acne strikes worst as the barometer falls, when weather is cold and windy. Patients misconstrue acne flare-ups at this time of year with traditional acne. Take a quick history of their products and eliminate all detergents or extraneous antiaging products. Favor serums that are lightweight yet moisturizing. Recommend salicylic acid lotions rather than washes. Focus on protecting the skin to eliminate the folliculitis from dry skin component of this seasonal acne.
- After Fraxel, many patients are told to use Aquaphor daily for one week. However, post-Fraxel folliculitis can be dramatic and extremely distressing to patients. Reserve Aquaphor for patients without a history of sensitive skin. For others, apply hydrocortisone cream 1% immediately after treatment and try Pramoxine twice daily for 2 to 3 days in addition to a moisturizer like Aveeno or Eucerin. For patients with especially sensitive skin, many dermatologists prescribe a Medrol Pak (remember to discuss the potential adverse effects).
- For a home-run eye rejuvenation, try hyaluronic acid in the upper cheek and massage upward into the tear trough. Use cold packs in advance to reduce anxiety and pain—even though injections in this area are incredibly well tolerated. Stay well outside of the margin of the orbital bone and also away from the infra-orbital foramen (midpupillary line) for safety. Hyaluronic acid can be used around the eye beginning medially toward the medial canthus all the way laterally around the periorbital rim upward to under the eyebrow.
- For those who like to use ice packs, order personalized packs with your office information on them to send home with the patient. For those of us who aren't quite there yet, try packaging 10 pieces of wet gauze inside

small zipper storage bags. Stack them in your freezer (they are incredibly space efficient!) and use 1 or 2 per patient. You may bend them or curl them easily to fit the contours of the face such as the tear trough. And they never drip!

- Switch patients to mineral-based sunscreens. They may be less irritating and are much more elegant in application. Patients prefer how light they feel and are more compliant with using sunscreen under their makeup in the winter when it is less popular to wear sun protection. As mineral makeup becomes more mainstream, mineral-based sunscreens are gaining popularity.
- For those patients whose skin is very damaged, don't forget to ask a few questions about their lifestyle. If they fly, the airplane humidity level is lower than a desert's. Ask if they ever moisturize. Ask how many hot baths they are enjoying. Also, check if they have a humidifier in their room. A humidifier can help and theoretically can be enhanced by adding chamomile or rose tea to the water.
- Don't be afraid of hydrocortisone cream 1%. It might be just the touch to ease patients with sensitive skin through a rough patch of winter skin. It can be used twice a day before moisturizer and makeup for 2 to 4 weeks. Then see the patient at follow-up to decide whether to discontinue or not. This is especially helpful for patients aged 30 to 60 years whose skin may be slightly irritated from xerosis but who cannot tolerate heavy creams without adverse effects such as acne or milia.
- Finally, pamper your staff so they have glowing skin. Offer microdermabrasion with a soothing mask. Offer intense pulsed light treatments; this long-forgotten "no downtime" procedure for fair skin is absolutely perfect for this time of year when rosacea and acne flare up. Offer a little glabella relaxation or filler to your staff. They will beam.

These pearls are mainly about saving your skin in winter and keeping the winter doldrums at bay. Invigorate your skin, your patients, and your staff this winter and it will fly by!

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