

Don't Get Burned

New Treatment options exist for fighting sun damage, skin cancer and aging

 BY FIONA WRIGHT, M.D.

The great state of Texas is the home of real cowboys, wide-open spaces, longhorns, bluebonnets ... and, unfortunately, one of the highest incidents of reported skin cancer in the country.

It's true. The oppressive Texas sun plays havoc with your skin. Besides skin discoloration from hyper-pigmentation, enlarged pores, collagen breakdown and wrinkles, you may develop more serious conditions that can threaten your well-being. Sun exposure causes skin cancer and its precursor: Actinic Keratosis.

According to extensive research, sun damage is responsible for 80-90 percent of skin aging and is also the No. 1 cause of Actinic Keratosis (AK). These lesions are red or skin-colored, rough, scaly patches found on sun-exposed areas, such as the face, scalp, arms and hands. They develop on fair-skinned people and if left untreated, they can increase in size and develop into skin cancer, which requires surgical treatment.

New treatment options for this damaging problem received national attention and were recently discussed when I was interviewed on the NBC News Health Report.

Actinic Keratosis is best treated with Photodynamic Photofacial. Successful treatments are for patients who want to not only avoid surgical treatments of skin cancer, but also want to turn back the hands of time and rejuvenate their skin.

Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) has multiple applications. The American Academy of Dermatology lists it as a newer treatment option with better cosmetic outcome than other therapies used to treat widespread AK.

During studies conducted by the FDA for the treatment of AK, patients were asked to rate the cosmetic effects of PDT. More than 90 percent rated the results as "excellent" or "good."

Studies also showed that there is little risk of scarring or skin discoloration. Patients also noted younger-looking skin. Some light sources and lasers used during PDT are also used to give patients younger-looking skin. When such a light source or laser is used to treat AK, patients tend to see a younger-looking complexion. Reports of a decrease in wrinkles, improved skin texture and reduced pore size are common.

Debbie Poche was diagnosed with skin cancer two years ago and had it surgically removed. Since then, she has had multiple appearances of Actinic Keratosis and has had them traditionally treated with topical creams and liquid nitrogen. She was unhappy with the scarring that was left from these treatments

and went to visit her doctor to look at other treatment options. After a personal consultation with her doctor, Poche chose Photodynamic Photofacial to treat her skin and has been thrilled with her results.

"I wanted a treatment that would not only treat those lesions you can see, but would also treat those that you cannot see," she said. "The extra benefits of improving my skin texture and wrinkles, reducing my redness and brown spots, without the risk of scarring – made it a simple decision for me to make."


Photodynamic Photofacials rid the body of skin cancer by using a special topical solution called "Levulan" that is activated by a light or laser, and targets and kills abnormal cells.

Levulan is a "smart" solution, meaning it's only absorbed by abnormal cells such as those in pre-cancerous AK, sun-damaged skin and acne conditions. It is the selectivity of this solution in targeting only the abnormal cells that allows such quick success in restoring your skin to a healthy, normal condition. As opposed to "spot" treatments for removing AK, PDT improves the entire face or area and also treats lesions that are not yet visible. By activating the Levulan with PhotoFacial it will also improve your cosmetic outcome by creating one color, better texture and even skin tones. In addition to the treatment of AK, PDT is also frequently used for improving resistant acne by reducing bacteria, oil production and pore size.

Such places as Skin M.D. & Beyond offer the most comprehensive and effective AK Treatment Program, using both laser and light sources. These programs use a multifaceted approach for effective treatment of AK and for the signs of photoaging.

Highly trained doctors will provide the best traditional prescription medical treatments with treatments, delivered by cutting edge technology, for the best chance of overall improvement.

Sun damage accumulates over the years and most people are usually unaware of it (with the exception of obvious sunburn).

It takes years for the damage caused by UV exposure to show up on the skin. Yet it only takes a moment to prevent the damage. 

An industry leader in non-surgical cosmetic procedures, Dr. Fiona Wright at Skin M.D. & Beyond, serves Plano, Dallas and surrounding areas. She has been featured locally on NBC5, ABC8 and in national magazines, such as Elle, Good Housekeeping and Redbook. To learn more, visit www.FionaWrightMD.com or SkinMDandBeyond.com.