

Q & A



DR. FIONA WRIGHT

Join the forum today by emailing our Dr. Wright at drwright@onmagazine.net and express your personal fitness or beauty question. She may answer your question or she may ask a colleague for their expert opinion. Then, read ON Magazine's next issue to discover the *wright* answer to your fitness or beauty question.

If you have questions, we have the *wright* answers.
What do you want to know?

Spot Check – Keep your skin healthy through summer and beyond

I am experiencing skin tone unevenness or darkened patches. What can be done to restore the skin to its natural color and prevent this hyper-pigmentation from coming back?

Clear, even-toned skin is the envy of all. Probably one of the more distressing skin problems facing Texans is skin discoloration. Most frequently a result of sun exposure or hormones, these brown splotches and darkened areas can be an ongoing problem for someone of any age.

It is important to realize that any sun exposure may reverse the results of the treatments mentioned below, so a broad spectrum sunscreen is essential, especially during the summer months. In the summer, the two most frequent culprits of hyper-pigmentation are sunshine and acne. Sunscreens that are oil free and contain high levels of zinc can help with these issues.

Prevention is the first step.

Using a topical pigment (melanin) blocking agent is the first step to success. Hydroquinone is a melanin blocker. You may have heard it called "skin bleach" as it blocks new melanin production. These products can be obtained over-the-counter in weak strengths (1-2 percent) or by prescription from your doctor. Formulations of 4 percent are readily prescribed and some doctors offer strengths up to 10 percent for patients. However, it must be noted that higher strengths of Hydroquinone have caused Hydroquinone-induced ochronosis (black speckling in the dermis) in patients with darker skin and have been banned in parts of Europe and all throughout Asia due to the belief that higher concentrations

used routinely are carcinogenic.

To offer patients the results of a high concentration Hydroquinone without the concerns, many products are now available which combine other botanical and chemical ingredients with or without low dose Hydroquinone. Some of the more effective alternative agents are kojic acid, niacinamide, azelaic acid, mequinol, retinoids, alpha-hydroxy acids (glycolic acid), salicylic acid, and licorice. In my clinic, *Radiance* is a summer favorite as it combines several effective pigment blockers with glycolic acid to help balance oils and prevent acne breakouts.

In addition, I recommend facial peels which increase cell turnover rate and thicken the dermis as well as correct hyper-pigmentation and texture problems. Exfoliation treatments from your esthetician/facialist can be considered rather mild to slightly invasive. Alternatively, you may visit your doctor, who has the access and experience to use strengths that are much more penetrating. The amount of improvement depends on the strength and/or number of treatments you have. Using prescription strength peels which may include salicylic acid, retinoic acid, glycolic or lactic acids are ideal summer peels to help both pigmentation and acne. Medical Grade Oxygen Facials can also be helpful to repair the UV damage created from the sun.

When the skin is assaulted by repeated exposure to the sun, a cycle of pigment over-production may begin. This is your skin's way of saying "Too much!" Once this cycle has started, it is difficult to stop and usually procedural intervention is

required. Treatments include Medical Microdermabrasion, Intense Pulse Light, and Laser Resurfacing. Your doctor can review your medical and skin history and offer you the best treatment options.

But remember, the most important summertime preventive measures are sun protection, acne control, and proper selection of your medical provider.

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Dr. Fiona Wright is the founder of Skin MD and Beyond Wellness Center (formerly the Aesthetic Institute of Plano). She has lived and practiced in Collin County for 12 years and has earned a reputation as one of the premier physicians in the area of cosmetic dermatology in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. She has been featured in several NBC News Health Reports and is well known for her honest opinions and expertise.

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