

Ocular Skincare

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A Ocular Skin Overview

The anatomy of the skin around the eyes (peri-ocular area) is unique to the face and body. As an eyecare professional, it is important to understand the anatomy of the peri-ocular area and how to help patients keep it healthy.

The eyelid skin is composed of several layers. The deepest, the subcutaneous or subdermal layer contains a thin layer of fascia which lies on top of the orbicularis muscle. Next, the dermis, which forms the support layer of the skin, is made up of threadlike proteins including bundles of elastin and collagen, fibroblasts, nerves and vessels. The top layer, the epidermis, is made up of basal cells, melanocytes, Langerhans cells, keratinocytes and on top, the dead cell layer (also known as the stratum corneum) made up of corneocytes. The epidermal layer gives the skin its appearance, color, suppleness, texture and health.

Basal cells reproduce new cells every few days. As these cells migrate upward, they become drier and flatter. Once they reach the surface of the skin, they are no longer alive, and are referred to as corneocytes. This process of migration from basal cell to corneocyte is what gives the epidermis the ability to regenerate itself. This skin renewal process is known as desquamation. Desquamation is an ongoing process that takes about two weeks in a young person, and significantly longer (about 37 days) for individuals over 50. The build up of corneocytes gives skin a callous or dry aged thickened look. The skin feels and looks rough and its ability to retain water becomes impaired. Proper care of the peri-ocular skin can provide long term benefits. Changes to this area can have functional, cosmetic and psychological ramifications. Since the eyes are the focal point of the face, the attendant bags, bulges and wrinkles can not only interfere with vision, they can give an individual a tired, sad appearance.

According to leading dermatologists, one way to combat the build up of corneocytes is to use alpha-hydroxy acids (AHA's). AHA's are a group of naturally occurring substances found in a variety of fruits, sugar cane and milk. AHA's cause a loosening of the outer dead cell layers which leads to exfoliation (sloughing of dead skin cells) The accelerated turnover allows the epidermis to become smoother and softer, and reduces the appearance of fine lines. By thinning the dead cell layer, AHA's enhance the penetration of other ingredients used in conjunction with them, such as moisturizers, antioxidant vitamins and herbal extracts. AHA's also act as superb moisturizers due to their hydroscopic (water-binding) ability.

Eyecare Professionals Understand Ocular Skin Care

As an optometrist in private practice, I have been routinely providing feedback to my patients regarding ocular skin care for several years. In our practice, we believe "total eyecare" involves not only the eye itself, but also the skin around the eye. With the vast array of skin care products available today, it is important for eyecare professionals to guide patients to a product which addresses their specific needs.

It is very important for patients to use an ocular skin care product that is oil free, especially contact lens wearers. Oil based products and contact lenses do not mix. Skin care products can cause several problems for contact lens wearers including permanent staining of the lens. Oil based products have a way of 'creeping' into the eyes and they not only stick to the lenses, they tend to blur vision. Even general eye care patients should avoid oil based products since they increase the likelihood of clogged meibomian glands which can lead to styes and other ocular problems.

Patients constantly ask what they can use to combat fine lines and puffiness under their eyes. We recommend OcuDerma® (MediNiche, Inc.) because it contains mild AHA's, moisturizers, antioxidant vitamins (including vitamin C) and a natural UV protectant; all in a greaseless, oil-free formulation. What really sold us on OcuDerma was the fact that it is manufactured with pharmaceutical grade ingredients, unlike most skin care products on the market today which are manufactured with cosmetic grade ingredients. Another key reason we recommend OcuDerma is the packaging. The tube style packaging minimizes the potential for contamination by eliminating the repeated need to dip fingers into a jar.

Because the eyelid has the thinnest skin on the body, Doctor Reynolds cautions that only a product containing a very mild AHA formulation, such as OcuDerma®, ocular skin therapy gel, should be used on the delicate peri-ocular area.

OcuDerma is available through MediNiche, Inc. a St. Louis, MO based pharmaceutical company. For more information, call toll-free 1-888-325-2395, email - ocuderma@mediniche.com, or visit www.mediniche.com.



The #1 Professionally Recommended Product for the Skin around the Eyes.