

## Skin and aging, part 2

Last week, we discussed some factors contributing to damages of skin, especially aging skin. There are several various concepts of looking and skin and aging.

The most crucial to remember of and actually consult a doctor is damage resulting from sun exposure called actinic keratosis. It is a pre-cancerous change, leading often to basal cell carcinoma if left untreated. Actinic keratosis or AK is not really easily recognized as a problem by patients themselves as it does not appear to us as something very visual. Knowing that we had it diagnosed once or twice in the past almost always guarantees we will have it again. It is very chronic and requires medical intervention from a doctor who can prevent its change into a more serious problem in a form of skin cancer.

Many skin changes associated with aging appear to be more aesthetically disturbing while they are not medically necessary to be treated. Darker spots called hyperpigmentation or small growths of dry skin called skin tags may be really annoying to patients but they do not really require any medical care. That does not mean that we cannot remove them to satisfy our visual need for a better-looking skin. However, we have to remember that majority of insurance plans will not pay for the procedures of removal considering them medically unnecessary.

Medicare patients who visit their dermatologist should discuss their concerns with their doctor and identify which skin problems should be treated as medical and thus, submitted to their medicare plan for reimbursement, and which are optional but still can be removed, with proper documentation. Patients usually are requested to sign a form ABN, which simply verifies that they are willing to receive a non-covered service and will be financially responsible for covering the cost of it.

And finally, there is a large variety of, so called, anti-aging medicine, which can deliver services



of improving skin look through preventing wrinkles, filling the deep wrinkles, or smoothing out the surface. None of the anti-aging services are insurance covered and often require payments at the time of service due to the high cost of products used in service ( Botox, Juvederm).

We all would like to retain and protect our skin for many years and we can enjoy utilizing many services helping us do so. However, we definitely must prevent skin changes to turn to medically challenging problems like skin cancer.

Please, remember that only a well-trained dermatology provider can distinguish and assure you of what is medically necessary to be treated and what is your personal option.

Dr. Michael Bukhalo and his clinical staff at Arlington Dermatology (previously known as Altman Dermatology Associates) have been serving the community of northwest suburbs for 13 years. Aging and geriatric skin are the most common medical problems they address six days a week. Do not hesitate to ask the questions that can prevent future problems of your aging skin. We will make sure to provide you education and treatment you need.

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