

ABCDE's of Sun Damaged Skin Therapy

Let's face it: Americans as a group seek the sun throughout their whole life. When we are young, we are involved in little league or soccer, and if we were lucky enough to have our parents put sunscreen on us before the game, the sunscreen "sweated off" long before we were out of the sun. When we were teenagers and young adults, we vacationed at the beach or at a ski resort. When we work, many of us had outdoor jobs. When we chose hobbies, many of us chose gardening or tennis or going to a football game in a stadium with no roof. When we retire, many retired to communities in Arizona or Florida, and spend a good deal of the day at the pool, at the beach, at the tennis court, or golfing. All of this sun exposure and our skin begins to complain.

What complaints does our skin show? The skin becomes blotchy; the skin has brown, flat spots that are unsightly, usually in the areas of most sun exposure like the face, hands, chest and arms. The skin develops rough growths, warty or scaly, also on the sun exposed skin. The skin becomes sallow and lifeless, and generally appears older than one's stated age.

There are 5 treatments that I call the **ABCDE's of Sun Damaged Skin Therapy**, which can improve the ravages of sun damage and keep your skin healthy:

1. **A** is for Actinic Keratosis treatment, which are the so-called pre-cancerous rough, scaly spots. The dermatologist has a variety of modalities to treat these keratoses, but the most common are with a liquid nitrogen spray or application of topical medications. Other times, they are scraped off.
2. **B** is for the Basal cell carcinoma and other skin cancer screening examinations followed by biopsy. Based on the biopsy diagnosis, the dermatologist recommends one of a number of different treatments.
3. **C** is for the color modulation which can be nicely improved by use of certain intense or broad band light treatments. The Sciton Laser has a BBL Module which produces a selectable wavelength based upon the color of the lesions sought to be modulated and the person's skin type. A series of treatment gently, safely, relatively inexpensively, and without any downtime modulates the sun damages skin of the face, neck and chest, or hands.
4. **D** is for dry skin therapy which includes good over the counter moisturizers or if necessary, prescription dry skin preparations (which have come a long way in recent years). Remember to apply the moisturizer on slightly damp skin and to keep showers or baths brief.
5. **E** is for the Entire wavelength of sun that you should try to protect against when you select a sunscreen. Remember, it's not just the SPF number that is important, (that is a measure of ultraviolet B protection), but whether the sunscreen protects against the Ultraviolet A wavelength (which are deeply penetrating rays and rapidly age the skin's appearance). Look for products that say "broad spectrum" or contain the following ingredients:

avobenzene, Parsol, oxybenzone, cinnamate, Mexoryl, Helioplex, and zinc oxide as examples.