DERMATOLOGY SPEECH

FOR

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Hello everyone! Thank you all for taking some time from your busy schedules to attend this conference and in particular, this presentation. For the past thirty years, I have been a practicing dermatologist in this area and it is my job, and passion, to focus on the health of skin, hair and nails. It is my intention that at the end of this session you will have learned some new ideas, tips and tricks about my favorite subject - probably the largest organ in the human body.... Yes... Skin.

As a dermatologist, I am constantly asked questions about the objects of my specialty and I am sure you have questions as well, so I thought I would give a quick overview, highlighting some of the issues and conditions that tend to be the more “popular” topics. First I want you to all understand that the skin really is a living, breathing organ of the body, one that is probably taken the most for granted-I mean after all, it’s **there**-all the time, all over us. It covers us, protects us from the elements, regulates our body temperatures, and provides a canvas for **MAKEUP**!! We have skin issues at every phase of our lives, from diaper rash to acne, sensitive skin to rosacea, stress bumps to skin tags, hives, “liver spots”… I could go on and on. Skin literally helps us “keep it together,” and, along with nails and hair, it serves as a barometer of our general state of health and well-being.

So many wise and clever quotes have been devoted to the topic. Someone once said, “Nobody grows old merely by living a number of years. We grow old by deserting our ideals. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul.” It can also be said that we grow older by deserting the **health** of our skin. Years of stress, improper diet, physical conditions, and medications are some of the culprits that do contribute to wrinkling the skin and robbing it of its natural glow. The skin is made up of three layers and as we get older, the epidermis, or outermost layer, gets quite thin, while at the same time the dermis, the middle layer, loses its ability to retain collagen, and as the collagen breaks down, wrinkles form.

As we get older, it becomes increasingly important to make sure to have a balanced diet. As we tend to be indoors more and more, whether it’s because we’re working longer hours to make ends meet, taking on more responsibility to support the survival of our families and communities, or for whatever reason, vitamin deficiencies can become more widespread. As women attain “certain maturity,” lack of sufficient supplies of certain vitamins can cause serious issues regarding calcium loss and in turn bone deterioration. Even though it’s essential to have sufficient supplies of vitamin D in our systems for healthy skin and bones, and even though the sun is an excellent source of vitamin D, we’ve all learned by now that sun does major damage to the skin. It’s important for us to make sure we take in sufficient amounts of vitamin D in the foods we eat. Dairy products like milk and yogurt that are fortified with vitamin D are a big help. So is the option of taking vitamins, but **DO NOT** be tempted to sit in the sun in order to get your “D’s.” The risk of skin cancer is too great.

As we get older, our skin also tends to be dryer. We may have had oily skin when we were younger-and that brought its own special set of issues, but now we deal with dryness and roughness. There are some fairly simple guidelines to help you handle skin that tends to be dry. Do not expose your skin to very hot water. Take shorter showers and baths and make sure the water isn’t hot. As soon as you get out of the shower, apply a body moisturizer. This will help to preserve the water that is in your skin from bathing. Try to stay away from products with alcohol. Yes. Alcohol dries the skin out. And it’s also a great idea to drink lots of liquids, and in particular, water. Drinking water, while some believe may not be directly responsible as a remedy for dry skin, surely aids body functions and organ health while moving toxins through and out of, the body.

Another issue that seems to affect most of us, yet is as **mysterious** as it is **popular**, is the strange but almost magical …SKIN TAB!!! You’ve seen ‘em, you probably have one or two or several, after all, it’s estimated that almost half the population has them, and yet, I’m sure you ask, as everyone else who is not a doctor does as well, **WHAT THE HECK ARE THEY**??? I’m about to make your day and describe the life and times of the skin tab. Skin tabs, or skin tags, are basically just that. They are benign, harmless, non-cancerous skin growths. They tend to form in the folds of the skin or when two areas of skin rub together. They begin to show up just as we start appreciating our new found wisdom and maturity-yes, at around the mid-fifties and up, but they can also form on the skin of pregnant women from the hormonal changes in the body. They can be hereditary and they can tend to form more frequently on people that are overweight and have more skin folds. As I said, although they may seem strange, they are harmless and if they don’t bother you, then you don’t have to bother them. Sometimes, depending on where they are on your body, you might want to have them removed-if they are rubbing against clothing and get irritated, or if one might be on your eyelid or in a fold or crease on your face or neck. At that point, you might consider getting rid of them. There are several methods of removal-one of which **ISN’T** doing it yourself in your makeshift ER, otherwise known as your bathroom!! (**Wait for the laugh**) Skin tags can be removed surgically (**Briefly describe the procedure**) as an outpatient \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They can also be frozen off with liquid nitrogen (**If you want to make a joke you can say, “Shades of ‘Top Chef!! ‘ Too bad they already did their liquid nitrogen tricks this season in New Orleans!” And wait for the laugh**). They can also be cauterized-that’s when they are burned off electrically… and no, I don’t offer roasted marshmallows and campfire songs when I do this procedure! (**Wait for the laugh**). There you have it-skin tabs demystified!!

The well-known author and wit, Dorothy Parker once said, “Beauty is only skin deep, but ugly goes clean to the bone.” Ladies, we’re here to support each other to be beautiful and healthy and vital through and through. I’m sure we all know by now that “Health is wealth,” knowledge is power, and really knowing yourself, inside and out, is incredibly empowering. I know that many of you may not have ever visited a dermatologist, but I am very happy that you chose to come and listen to what I have to say and maybe learn a thing or two to assist you in being more self-aware in caring for yourselves-in every manner. Each one of you is a potential force to be reckoned with, and as you take care of yourselves, you will inspire those around you to take care as well.

Thank you all for being here, and may you all be healthy, happy and wise in the skin you’re in! Thank you!!