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Speaker: Dr. Ben Johnson

Episode 7: Insider Secrets – Cosmeceutical Ingredients, Procedures and Devices Part 1

Hello, and welcome to the #ASKDRBEN Podcast. I'm your host, Ben Johnson. As a holistic-minded physician, I've spent the last 20 years looking outside the box and conducting research to find the true causes of skin conditions and other diseases. And while the focus of my work has been on aesthetic medicine and unlocking the secrets to reversing skin damage, this podcast will also include many other exciting revelations pertaining to you and your family's health and wellbeing. So, let's get started.

Hello, everybody, and welcome back to another podcast of Ask Dr. Ben. Loving these podcasts. This really gives me a chance to say what I want to say, and I've been wanting to say, to a bigger audience, for a long time, because I've been in this aesthetic industry now since 1997. So, 23 years, and I've seen a lot, I've learned a lot, I've had a lot of opportunity to interact with people who've had horrendous outcomes from a variety of different procedures, or horrendous outcomes from the use of specific ingredients, and or medications in order to solve problems. All I can tell you is, the truth is there for us to see, it's whether or not you're paying attention. I guess, if I could say, one of my traits that I think is serving me well here is, my openness to consider that everything isn't what they tell you it is.

It's not like most physicians struggle figuring out what's being said to them, but what can happen is, it's always a combination of things, right? So, it could be the pressure from their peers all believing this is how it is. So now they're sitting in a lecture where everyone around them is like, yeah, this is how it is and so there's a strong push when that happens, to fall in line and group think is paralyzing medicine, in my opinion, because we're all stuck in, which medications are going to help solve which symptoms? As I've mentioned in the past, we're not looking for the solutions to the origins of these problems. So that's been a focus of mine. It's definitely part of the Ask Dr. Ben philosophy, if you will.

So today we are talking about insider secrets, cosmeceutical ingredients, procedures, and devices. This is where I tell you about basically my holistic take, and really, I shouldn't just say holistic, it's my holistic and scientific take on what's been presented for us, to improve our lives, and improve our skin, and reverse aging, and or make aging look better, which is the goal for most cosmetic device companies. Is not to actually make your skin reverse in aging, because you can't trick the skin into doing that.

That's why so many devices just are oversold, and I think, in some degree, underappreciated for how they work. So, for example, LED lights, I do believe that LED light therapy on the face can increase collagen production, modestly. Okay? But the storyline has always been, they work by this light wavelength that we learned about through NASA.

For those of you in international listeners, NASA is the American, I think it's privately held, space institution. So, NASA did studies and when NASA does something, here in America, we all are like, yeah, real science, but the problem is, that you've got to always look for causality.

So, you shine a red light on your face, what are the things that occur as a result of that? Well, you're usually touching your face with it. A lot of these devices are designed to do that and so that's creating a level of heat. What does he do? Well, heat expanded the blood

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vessels. What does expanding your blood vessels do? Well, that increases the food supply and since, I've identified with you, for those of you who've listened to me before, you know that one of the big triggers as to why your skin begins to fail as you age, is the amount of circulation pulsing through your skin.

So, as you see an increase in circulation from any device or ingredient, it could be a positive, as long as it's not inflammatory. So, we have to separate out these devices that are causing harm. So, for example, right now, if you took your left hand and smacked your left cheek, you would generate, after initial sting, some circulation.

One could argue that that circulation was increased specifically to respond to this mild trauma, but yet the gain from it could be more circulation in the area, more food supply, a little bit more collagen production, maybe, if it's sustained. But that's unrealistic, nobody wants to be slapping themselves all day long to maintain a certain level of circulation. Plus, it's not cosmetically acceptable to have a slap mark on your face going around the day.

So, LED light, as you apply that to your skin, you also get the circulation, and where I think the confusion lies, is in the testing. If I test that shining this warm lamp on the skin increases collagen, is it caused by the wavelength itself or is it caused by heat?

My argument is its heat, mostly. No, I'm going to go with all the way. I don't believe the wave lengths are actually secretly, magically triggering some special collagen formation. So therefore, the question then lies, well, how much should I do it? How much should I pay? How much should I do?

That's what the goal of today is, is to give you some feedback on my approach to devices in the market. So, LED devices, we're starting there, and I would just tell you that you don't want to go for the least expensive devices. You want to appreciate the idea that while your skin is under the treatment, there's going to be some level of plumping that occurs as a result of this, let's say, five-minute therapy.

See, this is where the challenge lies. I can't just give you a one-off like, yep, go for that device, go for this length of time, go for this wavelength. Again, I'm not convinced the wavelengths matter. I think infrared light on the face is just as beneficial as 894 nanometers, if you will. So, for that reason, what we want to do here is look for devices that are inexpensive, or really avoid putting too much money into this device.

I know there are people out there who are buying and investing in these LED beds, but here's what we do know from the science, number one is, your skin is sensitive to heat and at a certain point, my estimate is in a lot of these devices, that could be less than five minutes into the procedure, your skin has actually maxed out the benefit and it is now just being modestly cooked.

So that heat damage is a negative. Overdoing LED is a bad idea. That's why lying in those LED beds is a problem for me, because you're usually doing that for like a half hour, I think, is for the recommended amount. So, you're actually, overexposing your skin to heat that's not beneficial and is there a net benefit to it? I don't know if I'd call it a net benefit. There's going to be a mild to moderate detox effect, there's infrared heat coming off of these LEDs, I believe. I believe it gets a little warm in those beds. I honestly haven't done a bed.

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So, there's an example of something where I wouldn't invest in a bed. I wouldn't invest in treatments by a bed. My go-to inexpensive strategy is 30 minutes of sauna, twice a week, 30 minutes of getting it to 165, 170 infrared saunas, the more infrared admitting it is. I prefer the radiators as the strategy that seems to be the most efficient.

So, there you go, saunas instead of LED beds and that way you don't damage your skin over time. Because you're not getting that localized heat, it's sort of a generalized heat. So yes, the whole body is heating up, but there is a benefit to heating the body up and my estimation is twice a week, half hour.

All right, moving on to other industry devices that are interesting. For me, I'm not a big fan of devices that cause trauma. So, when you're going in and getting a procedure where they're, for example, freezing your skin to burn something off, well, that's burning your skin, just so you know. It might sound nicer using a freezing component, but it's actually still burning your skin and causing oxidative damage.

So, I'm not a fan of those in general. Although, sometimes freezing something off is cosmetically a better outcome than cutting it out. You can weigh those risks if you've got something that we don't have a solution for, you can certainly look into that.

There's also, I guess I would summarize it by telling you that any device that has to burn your skin in order to treat something is probably not a great device. By the way, that follows in the same category of ingredients, which we're going to get to here soon. So, ingredients that burn the skin, also a challenge that you need to watch out for.

Let us move on to Botox. I've been assuming that Botox was going to end on its own, actually, because of some kind of a class action lawsuit at some point. When all these people start realizing that their face is sagging because of Botox, or they actually have a tremor as a result of the brain STEM damage that Botox causes.

So, let me just say flat out, and I hope I'm reaching a younger audience here, because one of the craziest trends going today is Botox for preventative wrinkle treatment. Yes, that's right. People don't have wrinkles, but they go in and they get Botox anyway, at a ridiculous amount of money, to go and poison their muscles to death and it literally does poison the muscles to death, so they continually atrophy and shrink away and die on you as a result of repeated Botox treatments. That is what leads to the face sagging, but there's a double-edged sword to it as well, because not only does the muscle weakness over time result in a more rapidly sagging face, remember your face is leaning towards the sag anyway, every decade of your life, gravity has pulled your face a little bit more down. Part of that has to do with volume. So, your muscles holding your face up. By the way, if you ever look at the muscle design of the face, if there's not an argument there for divine brilliance, I don't know what is. The muscles, and the way they, the functionality they allow, the strength they require, the layout that was done to make your face as functionally and aesthetically pleasing as possible, as I stare at it.

So, poisoning those muscles, guys? No, please stop, it is not a benefit. Now let's get to the two other problems with Botox. Number two problem is volume loss. One of the biggest challenges that your face faces as you age, is volume loss. Where does that show up most? Well collagen is what's talked about the most, but honestly the next two things after that are actually much more significant losses in the face.

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So yes, it's true that your dermal collagen loses about 1% a year. So, let's say at age 50, you've lost 25% of your dermal collagen. Well, that's significant and that definitely is a component of the formation of a wrinkle, but fat, fat pads and facial fat determine, also, how resilient your skin is to resisting forming wrinkles.

So, if you're overweight, by even 10 pounds, your subcutaneous fat in your face helps make your face look better. Then there's a secondary fat, which is called the fat pads of the face and those declines with exposure to toxins, in particular, salt and sugar toxins. Those cause a volume loss that can be quite obvious, and really in my book, is the most aging event on the face is the fat pad loss right under the orbital bone and right along the orbital bone.

It causes a darkening and a cavity there that is so common, I think, that we don't even notice it. But when we just, every time you scan someone's face, someone you're meeting for the first time, or repeatedly, you don't realize it, but you've done a full-on analysis of their health, their energy level. Honestly, you actually, I think, you're doing a consciousness exchange, where literally you're able to assess every aspect of them, in a subconscious awareness, so you're not even, these are subconscious things. Like I believe we have an instant truth meter in our bodies that is at a subconscious level. Where a mind isn't playing tricks on us, at that subconscious level, we know what the truth is and what isn't.

Anyway, you're analyzing a face, one of the things you see is this loss in volume. So, the fat pads, and where the fat pads become most obvious is, when someone loses that 10 pounds of weight that they've been trying so hard to do.

So, the sad truth is, when we get into our late thirties and beyond, we're like, oh man, it's time to get in shape again. I want to get back to looking like I did when I was younger. This getting old thing kind of sucks and so they start getting in shape and all of a sudden, they're like, whoa, wait a minute. I'm looking worse. What is that? Well, that is the fat pad loss that you have to watch out for.

So, with Botox, you lose that muscle volume over time, every time you inject it into your face. So, let's say every three to six months, you were literally killing another segment of your muscle volume off and as a result of that, your facial volume also diminishes at a high level.

If you were measuring, and I haven't done the calculations on this, I don't know if it's out there, but if assuming that a muscle in your face is about as much as, let's say, a centimeter thick, and you lose half of that with repeated Botox injections, then you've lost a half a centimeter.

Well, I guarantee you, half a centimeter is way more volume than 25% of your dermal collagen. So, if you're following my logic there, we're all focused on how do we make more collagen and we should just be equally as focused, if not more focused on, how do we prevent facial muscle atrophy? Don't do Botox. How do we prevent facial fat pad atrophy? Well, that's a little bit harder, but let's just say we have a solution for that, which is my osmosis [Recovery](#), just launching now, that replenishes fat pads by as much as 80%.

So that's why you want to do Botox, but I'm going to throw one more thing in for Botox, and that is, its research proven to affect the brain STEM. So, your brain STEM houses a lot of really important motor functions and it is my belief, and again, no one's officially linked what

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symptoms come from the brainstem damage, they've only officially determined that brainstem damage does occur when you inject Botox into your face. Why? Because not all the Botox sits there, guys. It goes into your circulation. Its roundabouts, who knows if it's affecting brain matter as well, but through muscle testing, my determination is, brainstem is definitely the main target, and the most critical aspect of this.

So here, let's just rewrite this narrative. We have a ton of 30- and 40-year-olds whose wrinkles between their eyebrows, that are driving them nuts, mainly came from fat pad losses in their forehead and they are injecting a poison into their bodies to poison their muscle and poison their brainstem.

That's what's happening right now in a rampant way. So, you could realize why, I think, we are a bit lost when it comes to that and I think, eventually there's going to be... This is just going to end. This experiment with Botox is going to end.

By the way, many cosmeceutical procedures have been abandoned once we realized, oh, shoot, that was not what we wanted to happen and there's way too many side-effects. It wouldn't surprise me and let me just jump into lasers here for a second. My biggest problem with lasers is that I don't believe that when you burn the skin with a laser, the skin gets younger or healthier. In fact, the evidence is the opposite, when you burn the skin with a laser, you create DNA damage, long-term permanent DNA damage, from heat damage by that laser.

Of course, there's the trauma of the event, which let's just say, a third of people are typically left with some traumatic, permanent change in their skin that's negative, as a result of these aggressive laser procedures. Then, unfortunately, some of them, and especially the ones where they're basically creating little micro wounds throughout your skin, those are the lasers that are leaving in some, not everybody, but in some, especially on the third or fourth visit, what was is like orange peel appearing skin.

In other words, it looks like they've had massive horrendous acne as a child, because their skin has collapsed in spots because remember, when you burn deep, and that's what high speed ultrasonic wounds can do, that's what certain types of laser, CO2 laser can burn quite deep into the skin. It's only the erbium laser, really, that's really shallow.

So, all the other lasers are designed to heat deeper and deeper into the skin, depending on the wavelengths used and that wound deep into the skin can create a shrinking of collagen. And it almost always does. I guess that's the big summary of lasers, is the selling point is that when they burn the bejesus out of you, it takes a while for your skin to heal and during that time, your skin is tight.

I swear to you, that is the selling point of a laser when you come right down to it. Now it's sold on a couple of other misleading facts, which is like, oh yeah, you should do it to treat your pigmentation. Well, it's not really healing the source of your pigmentation. In fact, in a lot of people, it makes their pigmentation worse to do laser procedures.

So, I don't advise it for pigmentation. I get that it can be quite instant when you burn off your epidermis, and it rushes to replace itself, it will be less pigmented when it comes in. Yes, that is true. But, that lack of pigmentation is almost universally short-lived, unless the laser is so aggressive, and this happened a lot with CO2 lasers, which are working their way out of

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the system, it appears. With CO2 lasers, tons of people were getting hypo pigmentation, no color. No color in their skin in these areas. The classic example would be somebody who was getting a ton of wrinkles around the mouth, which by the way, is caused by fat pad atrophy. That's not gravity, that's fat pad atrophy we have a solution for. So, these people would go into the doctor, and this was worse 20 years ago, less common 10 years ago, and honestly, I'm not sure how common it is today.

They would burn their mouth, deep, deep burn with this is a CO2 laser burn. Sometimes they might use a phenol chemical peel burn and they'd end up with this big white patch in a goatee pattern around their mouth. Their lip looked tighter, because they scarred their dermis. So, I guess the net effect, I don't know, if you would've told me, hey, listen, you could have fewer wrinkles around your mouth, but you're going to have no pigment there at all. I think I would not choose that procedure.

Yet, that was done often, and repeatedly, and is still available today. So, I'm not a fan of lasers, because I believe when they measure the collagen increase that lasers produce, what they are measuring is the increase of collagen that your skin would do in any condition where it got burned.

So, if you took a cigarette and put it out on your skin, you could measure an increase in collagen production. Any wound you did, if you stuck your hand in a flame and burned your hand, and measured, you would measure increased collagen production. So, it seems to me, disingenuous to use collagen increases as your proof that this is a rejuvenating procedure when you are burning the bejesus out of people.

So again, not a big fan of lasers and I had lasers. A part of what the understanding, if you're wondering who is this guy? If you've never heard of me before, for many years I had laser clinics and yes, it's true, I had to close them all. I lost my shirt in the process. It was a big learning curve for me.

But that was 20 years ago and now, I've been living in the world of aesthetics, and practicing as a holistic physician for my client base, just so you know, I don't practice and have an aesthetic practice.

The number of cases I see every day, because I am the go-to support system for a relatively large network of estheticians, physicians, and naturopaths, and the like, I've had a chance to see these outcomes of these people and you can go to your laser forums if you want, and go to your Botox forums if you want, and read about, what is it, Stevie Nicks, the famous singer? She says, every time she laughs or coughs, her forehead collapses over her eyes, like she has to push her forehead back up, because of the years of Botox that she did.

So, guys, hopefully all of that has helped you in understanding that these procedures aren't beneficial. In my estimation, there is no net gain. Occasionally, let's go with 5% of laser procedures might get lucky, and they might scar down and have sort of long-term wrinkle improvement, because of scarring. I put that in the 5% category. So that means everybody else has temporary results, spend a lot of money, and their skin came out more aged, more damaged than before.

You say, how was that possible? Dr. Johnson, if let's just say, there was an increase in collagen, and most of the collagen I lost when I got burned by the laser got restored, is that

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not a good thing? Isn't that newer collagen? Listen, most of the collagen in your skin is in perfect shape, and you don't need to burn your skin in order to replace it. It won't change how it produces and so, yeah, there might be a few molecules that actually get, let's say, improved upon in their rebirth, but it's not nearly enough to justify all of the DNA wounding that occurred in the process.

I think that's really what we need to talk about, is what's the long-term effect of doing repeated laser procedures? One of them, I guess I will mention, that I didn't hear, is not a laser. It's called IPL. So, IPL puts out a variety of wavelengths, not just one and the definition of a laser is a single wavelength, so a variety of wavelengths into the skin. It tends to collapse micro blood vessels; I don't like that. Yes, it can lift some pigment. Yes, if they turn up the juice, it can make your skintight for a week or two.

Trust me when I say, it is not collagen generating. By the way, all those IPLs launched with a massive claim of increases collagen, but they've all bailed on that claim and now, it's about improving uneven tone. But listen, where my argument is, don't do anything that shuts blood vessels, unless it's a single unattractive blood vessel in somewhere very visible on your face, and you just want to shut that one down with the laser. That might be okay.

You just should know that that's what Michael Jackson was thinking before his nose fell off. No, I say that half facetiously, it is true though, that I've seen a case where someone had a blood vessel closed on their nose, and it was post rhinoplasty, and they ended up losing a chunk of tissue as a result of that.

So, blood vessels matter, guys. So, make sure when you're picking your blood vessels to close, be very selective. Most of them are there, and purposeful, and amazing.

Well, I guess let me finish on fillers, since we're doing cosmetic procedures, and fillers are a mainstay currently of the cosmetic world. Fillers are okay in one way, they're not very inflammatory. They still are inflammatory. Believe it or not, even though they call themselves hyaluronic acid, they're modified form, the body looks at it as a foreign material, that's why the body tears it down and tries to get rid of it.

The bad news is, according to some MRI results, you could be holding onto these little balls of hyaluronic acid for as much as a decade. A decade later you still have them in your skin, and this is, you could say, well, isn't that good, because I like the aesthetic? Well, yes and no. If you get lucky enough that some part of your filler procedure was permanent, and it was just the perfect part that just perfectly made your eyes look amazing, congrats to you.

For most people, they're going to end up with a lump, or a few lumps on their face, unless they keep chasing it with more filler. The biggest news I can share with you, that most people don't know, is if you're putting filler in your upper lip and you notice it's not lasting very long, where it's doing is it's migrating from the exterior portion of your lip to the interior aspect of your lip, the part that hangs over your front teeth and it builds up over time. So, you literally get duck lip from the nose down with repeated fillers, which is why I advise you not do fillers in the lips, because they don't stay there, and they don't leave your face. So, it's just not a good procedure.

I remember a family member of mine got Gore-Tex filler a decade ago, maybe 15 years ago, and it was shocking when it disappeared within like a month and we're all sitting around

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going, and I didn't put it in, but you're all sitting around going, okay, Gore-Tex, does the body tear down Gore-Tex? I'd be surprised.

Well, no, it just migrated it. So, she's got this loose Gore-Tex sheet in her upper lip somewhere. I don't think she necessarily feels it, but I'm just saying, no. No to fillers. My main problem with fillers is that your face, the beauty of your face is in its angles, in most people. I'm just talking about classic beauty. Obviously, there's very beautiful round faces, but sort of the classic beauty is in the angle of the cheekbone, the angle of the jawline and fillers inherently are angle killers. They're angle rounders.

I just feel like all celebrities look the same. Even newscasters, it's almost like some of the most beautiful women, who have the most beautiful cheekbones, are still adding filler because I guess everybody else is? Because that's what you do? Because that's what people think is attractive?

I don't know, I don't get it. I say, restore your fat pads with recovery, and don't look back. You do not need fillers. Now, if you restore your fat pads, and you have still got some atrophy from something, or some deficits, there might be a place for a little bit of filler here or there. The emphasis on little bits of filler, I don't think that's the end of the world, but definitely not Botox, definitely not laser, definitely not acid peels. That falls into that same category of wounding the skin, causing DNA damage, but not actually getting a net gain in collagen. That is absolutely true in acid peels. There's no acid peel study that showed a thickening of collagen.

The only study that showed any hint of it was a TCA peel study where they saw an enlargement of the grin zone in the dermis. Well, let me explain that for a second. Your grin zone is basically your preparedness zone for making, maintaining, and repairing your epidermis. You can imagine, you throw a TCA peel on your face, burn the bejesus out of it. I guess that's my favorite saying on the burning part and your skin is absolutely going to load up on the dermal side, getting ready to fix this sucker that's been burned to a crisp. So yeah, no dermal density.

So, you say, "Well, Dr. Johnson, how about epidermal? Is it doing a more superficial peel? Let's say a glycolic, or a lactic, or a Jessner's peel, how about those peels? What about this idea of controlled wounding?" That's a fallacy, guys. Controlled wounding is a fallacy that needs to be abandoned. For that reason, I would say, there is a slight benefit in pigmentation. If I burn a superficial peel like a glycolic, or a lactic, or salicylic, and I lift some of the pigment off really quickly, yes, I'm going to see a lightening, but the heating of the wound, remember age spots are caused by a wound in your DEJ.

When you send acids under your skin, you burn your DEJ and so you are actually causing the age spot wound to get worse when you burn it off. That's why I don't like burning it off. So, on that note, let's go ahead and stop here for session one. I'm going to make this a two-part series, because I have a lot more to get into with ingredients and I'm realizing that I went a little overboard on the equipment side.

I don't want to overwhelm you today, so note to self, we're going to move this to podcast two.

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