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Speaker: Dr. Ben Johnson
Episode 21: Fall and Winter Key Skin Strategies

Hey everyone. Welcome back to another episode of ask Dr. Ben. I am your host, Ben Johnson. I am happy to be joining you today. The subject matter today is one that I decided to do because I was triggered by a comment out in the webosphere about, "It's fall. It's Peel season." So I decided I should do an episode on... Well, I kind of want to call it winterizing your skin, but it's really just adjusting your skin protocols to the new changes in our weather patterns, for this part of the world anyway. As you know, it gets colder, it gets a little wet, more wet, and then it can result a little bit later on with your skin getting dried out. So I thought I would go over what do we need to do to recover from all the sunshine that you hopefully got during the summer months?

Then how do we proceed into these months with the best strategies so that we address what is oftentimes dry skin and heal the damage from any excess sun that you may have gotten? Let's just jump right in on this concept of fall as the peel season. Now, if many of you that are listening are estheticians, I think, and a lot of consumers as well, but I don't want to offend anyone when I say I don't believe that there's ever a good time to do a chemical peel. [Osmosis](#) has a product that we call a peel but it's really facial infusion. It's a super nutrient rich collagen stimulation facial, is basically what it is. It's done by the professionals, so go see your local [Osmosis Professional](#) to get one of these amazing facials. And oftentimes they're doing it with something called the Revita Pen Pro, which we can talk about a little bit here. Because I'm actually going to bring up one of our new devices, it's a cousin to the Revita Pen Pro.

So why am I against chemical peels? How do chemical peels actually work? And when, if ever, are they beneficial? The first thing I object to is the concept that our skin is building up, and it's dead skin cells, and that's why it feels dry or rough. That to me is just a rarity. It's very rare that anyone's skin would actually have excess layers of stratum corneum. Remember your skin is working 24/7 for a hundred plus years of your life. It is not making very many mistakes. I would argue it really never makes a mistake. What it does is it just adjusts to the environment that it's in. So that means that there is no excess stratum corneum. Now sometimes what I think people are identifying is a slowing of the turnover of the skin.

The average healthy adult skin has a 30 day turnover cycle, meaning it takes about 30 days for the epidermis to complete its renovation efforts. When we get older that tends to slow down. So they estimate by the time you're 50 maybe you have a 50 day cycle. By the time you're 70 you might have a 55 day cycle. I don't know. I don't even know how they're tracking these numbers as far as what the turnover rate is. I'm trying to even imagine the scientific experiment to measure that. But I do believe the skin slows down and it does slow down more in the winter. So it's interesting that those two are parallel, but let me explain to you the actual logical reason why your skin begins to slow down.

The 30 day cycle process is completely adjusted by the blood flow to the skin. In other words, how much you feed your skin at any given moment will determine whether or not it is going to operate at full capacity that day. The more days in a row where the skin has a

ask DR. BEN

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

nutrient deficiency, the more likely it is to slow down to accommodate. It's kind of like if you don't eat enough food your body's metabolism slows down. It's very, very much equated to that. What people forget is that as your skin ages it loses about 1% of its circulation every year after say age 25-ish. So that means at age 30 you have 5% less nutrients go into the skin, so you could imagine your skin would slow down by 5%. By the time you're 50, you have 25% fewer nutrients going down to the skin. That's a pretty significant slowdown of the skin.

Now, how does that appear? Well your skin might appear a little more rough. It might appear a little more dull. But it's, really hard to tell exactly, there's not as big difference between cells that have been sitting around an extra week, because ultimately that's what we're talking about. When we say slowed skin turnover at age 50, we're talking about going from 30 days to 37 or 38 days in your cycle. That's not that big a deal. Yes, it's always great to feed your skin and the Osmosis philosophy is absolutely to increase the circulation as close as we can back to its original healthy, 100% blood flow state. But don't overly compensate for that slowed turnover concept, which is a big one. It was a major aspect of the selling pitches that were done over the last 30 years. "Oh, you've got to come in, your turnover, we've got to speed your turnover back up."

What they don't tell you, and what they should tell you, is that by peeling your skin in a facial, you actually do speed your skin up quite rapidly. You might even be faster than 30 days because your skin looks at the damage to the barrier as an emergency. So you might even get a 20 day cycle turnover rate after a harsh chemical peel, but it slows right back down because nothing in that peel itself did anything to increase circulation. This idea that you need a peel to speed the turnover rate in the winter time is false. Now, the other reason they talk about doing peels in the winter of course is because you really shouldn't do them in the summer. It's a much higher risk of post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, PIH, which just means that you've created wounds in your skin and when you go in the sun, in order to protect you from hurting those wounds further, your skin will make Brown patches, melanin clouds, if you will, above the wounds, and we call this PIH.

There's less chance of that in the winter, and I think for that reason the winter time is oftentimes another argument for "peel season". But let's just remind ourselves what we're saying when we're saying a chemical peel. A chemical peel, traditionally it's going to be something like alpha hydroxy acid. So it might be a lactic or a glycolic acid peel. It could be a beta hydroxy acid known as salicylic acid peel. It could be a TCA peel, or if you're really going crazy, you're getting something like a phenol peel, which is "melt your skin to the bone" kind of peel.

Each of these peels have a different level of depth to them. Typically AHA peels and the BHA peel, the Salicylic peel, all of them are going to be shallow to medium depth. That all depends on how acidic the formula is. Because you can have a peel with a pH down near one and that will definitely burn deeper and more aggressively than a peel with a pH in the threes. Different companies adjust their peel mixes to changes these pHs for aggressiveness. I don't want to leave off Jessner's peel, Jessner's peel is a combo peel as well, pretty common. So those are the peels.

ask DR. BEN

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Then there's the green peel, there's another name for it. I used to actually offer that with my last skincare company, a version of it anyway, and that is also traumatic. So all these peels are burning the skin. And, yes, it still boggles the mind when you say that out loud, doesn't it? "Yes. I want to make myself younger so I'm going to go burn my skin."

It's just not a logical process. Acids in general do cause DNA damage. So they create a long-term burn. They also cause what we call DEJ damage. So that's the dermal epidermal junction. That's that layer that is basically situated between your epidermal layers, your very surface layers, and your dermal layers where the critical collagen matrix lies that has so much to do with your wrinkle formation. A lot of estheticians and physicians believe that if you burn the skin you will replace that epidermis and therefore it will be healthier and younger. It just isn't true. When your skin is rushed to replace itself, first of all, it's not creating a healthy barrier, it is creating a short term, temporary barrier. It will get to healthy barrier as long as you don't keep exfoliating yourself, we're going to get to exfoliation here in a second.

It can't get to a healthy barrier if you keep peeling the barrier off with acids or wiping off the lipids with alcohol toners. I can tell you where there is a definite positive with a chemical peel. That is you come in from summer, you have these wounds on your skin, and you just have to own this stuff, right? You got to know that years and years of sun exposure will lead to wounds in the skin that don't heal. So you go into summer and what ends up happening is by the end of summer you've accumulated more wounds on those wounds that haven't been able to heal. The skin begins to trigger what is effectively the post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation, or the PIH. But the other way to describe that it could be an age spot. It could be brown spots on your face, sometimes people will affectionately call them freckles.

There is a very distinct difference between freckles and age spots. Freckles are in fact genetically programmed increases in melanin production that are not related to damage. But again, they can certainly get bigger in the sun, so they're not immune to becoming darker and larger in the sun. Age spots are distinctly different. Age spots are literally protecting your wounds. When you come out of summer, you've got more of those age spots and they are unsightly, of course. So you want to get rid of them and you think, "Oh, a quick chemical peel will do that." There is some truth to that. It is true. So how does that work? How does a chemical peel help an age spot? Well, let me tell you, first and foremost, it does not help an age spot.

It hurts the age spot because the age spot is a wound, and you've just burned your face again and created more wounding. So it actually doesn't help the age spot. It does help the protective pigment component of the age spot look lighter, and all you're really doing there is you're removing, at a very fast pace, a bunch of stained epidermal cells. Those surface cells become stained with melanin, that's why they look brown in a certain region. If you remove them really fast, like with a peel, then the replacement layers that come in as fast as they can, because it's an emergency when the epidermis is missing, they come in so fast they don't have time to get properly stained. Even though the melana site is still producing melanin and is hoping at a normal pace it would create the age spot back on your face again, by burning it off quickly you end up seeing less staining.

ask DR. BEN

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Now does that last? No, that doesn't last. And if you were to do that in the summer the age spot would come back pretty quick. But see in the winter, the fall and the winter, when you peel that off, there's not as much sun, so the skin actually takes a little bit of a break and it produces less melanin cause it needs less melanin. So in effect, I see why people got attached to that September peel because they saw the lightening of the spots that were growing on their face over the summer months, they peel them off, and they don't come back nearly as densely or as quickly because typically they're not seeing a lot of sun after August. Just know that the age spot wound got worse. It did not help in any way treat the source of the problem, which is what Osmosis is all about.

I'm not a big fan of peel season. I think that the fastest way to get your spots to healthy is to use [Osmosis Rescue](#) and potentially also [Osmosis Catalyst AC 11](#). What you're doing with those is you're healing the wound that's at the DEJ. So what's happening with most lighteners where you're like, "Oh, well this is working a lot longer than three months, Dr. Johnson, how's that possible?" Well, what's happening in that case is you're either one, poisoning the melanocyte, which I highly advise against, and the two ingredients that do that the most are hydroquinone and retinoic acid. So they poison the melanocyte in your skin which ultimately will lead your skin to being less capable of producing melanin in the future. And of course they also cause DNA damage to the skin. So they create permanent changes and permanent damage that are negative, but they can be an effective lightener, and so I get why you might be drawn to that.

Now the other group, the other category, is Tyrosinase inhibitors. This is a more common category. There's a whole host of those. Then there's a host of what are called receptor blockers. So there's things that interfere with certain melanocyte receptors and they reduce melanin activation because they block the hormones that trigger melanin. All of those can be used. I use a combination of those and a product we had called Enlighten. Now if you're Googling it or wondering, "Oh, I didn't know they had something, a tyrosinase inhibitor product." I had taken it off the market for a little while, made some improvements to it, and we'll be launching in here soon. But here's the explanation of why other lighteners work longer than three months.

The explanation is they have exfoliants in them. I've seen this strategy, and I appreciate, especially when it comes to liver spots, liver spots are so hard to treat and you know I have a Regenerate supplement coming out that's designed for those coming soon, but they're so hard to treat because they're dermal pigmentation, it's a dermal wound, it's really epidermal pigmentation. But the trigger is strong for that one to produce melanin. So lighteners typically don't work. Exfoliants can, and that's where you can use different acids. That's why people exfoliate every day. Well, exfoliating every day is a mistake because it dries your skin out, it removes your skin lipids. It is not a benefit to the skin. It sun sensitizes you because it also removes some of the reflective barrier of the skin. They also wound, right? Now, usually the daily application of exfoliant like alpha hydroxy acids is not going to be hot enough from a pH standpoint, or to create enough of a wound like it's a DEJ wound.

It might stay mainly in the epidermis, the wound, but it's still a wound and you're still constantly wounding your skin, which is immune-suppressing, and certainly not a holistic philosophy the way I Osmosis likes to live it. But I did put together a combination and a new

ask DR. BEN

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

product coming out called Brighten, which is the most gentle turnover accelerator, I'll call it, that I could find. It's a really nice formula for sensitive skin. The only reason I have it guys is because I know that some of you that are treating melasma age spots, you should be seeing phenomenal results in eight weeks with [Rescue](#) and [Catalyst](#), but for some of you with melasma and liver spots, the healing your liver takes many months. I appreciate that you want to do something during that healing time, so I've created this Brighten and I think you're going to like it.

It's a very gentle exfoliator. So again, once your skin is no longer as worked around the tyrosinase inhibitor, you can use this exfoliant, very gentle exfoliant combo, to keep the lightening going until we heal you from the inside out. That's really what my ultimate goal is. I'll move on now to a different category. I do just want to remind you that age spots can be permanently treated with [Rescue](#) and [Catalyst](#). We see it every day. You should be seeing it. I hope you're getting those amazing results. A lot of people wonder, "Well, can I heal age spots with antioxidants?" No. In fact, antioxidants at higher strengths could actually inhibit the healing of age spots because in order to heal age spots you actually have to heal oxidative damage. Your skin, as I've discovered, uses oxygen to do that. It doesn't use oxygen free radicals to do that, as that makes more damage, but it uses a stabilized oxygen to do that. That's why [Rescue](#) is such an amazing product.

Let's move from fall where I'm going to try to talk you out of doing chemical peels and focusing on wound healing, because that's really what you should come out of summer thinking "Okay, it's time to heal that sun damage", and go even farther, by the way, and not only heal what you just created, but let's heal damage from two years ago, three years ago and beyond. Because that's how [Osmosis](#) works. We're permanently changing the skin and recovering damage from decades past. All of that is quite possible.

But as we move into the winter when the dry skin becomes certainly more prevalent, I want to focus a little bit of this conversation on moisturizers and help you understand exactly why. Remember what I said earlier, when your skin starts to get dried out, it'll feel a little rough. That has mainly to do with a loss of Lipids on the skin. That's what makes your skin feel rough. It's not about excess keratin, or keratinocytes, or dead skin cells, however they write about it in the silly news articles that come out about skin. It's really about the turnover rate. So you're focusing on circulation, and that's important with moisture as well. If you think about it, when it's cold out, what does your body do? Well, it conserves heat, and the way it conserves heat is it reduces the blood flow to the surface because the surface is really cold. So the less blood flow you have going through your skin, the warmer your body can stay. This is part of the reason why skin dries out because the skin, when it's in that state, it's not turning over as rapidly.

Therefore, you can get that dryness. It's not being fed as adequately so you have less lipid manufacturing happening, less intact barrier potential, because, again, there's more starvation happening. If you're 50 and you have 25% less circulation going to your skin, well, that's impediment number one. Then it gets really cold out and your skin shuts down circulation even more. You might have half the circulation going to your skin that you would when you were 25 years old in the spring and summer. Well, that's pretty big. And that means you've got to make some corrections. That's where [Osmosis](#) really focuses on

ask DR. BEN

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

improving circulation with our vitamin A serums, [Correct](#) and [Renew](#). They're phenomenal at that. Not only do they have a really high strength liposome delivered niacinamide that gets right down to the blood vessel area and dilates them, but it doesn't do so to flush you out, it does enough to just feed the skin and not flush you. I designed it that way. Then you have Chlorella, which is amazing at rebuilding new blood vessels. And you have [Stemfactor](#), which is our growth factor serum that's just also got many growth factors targeted at rebuilding new blood vessels in your skin, VEGF comes to mind. Fibroblast Growth Factor actually also triggers that. So your skin is an interesting creature and it is very adaptive to the environment. If you want to make up for this stuff, the happening from an environment perspective, you've got to do it by changing the nutrient base within the skin, and that's how I would do it. But let's shift also to moisturizers where we have a really fair amount of misinformation.

For example, hyaluronic acid is great in humid environments at drawing water to its molecule and thereby increasing plumping and increasing moisture in the skin. But in a dry environment the opposite happens. Now you have hyaluronic acid pulling water from your epidermis and not from the environment. So it's a really interesting one. I don't always recommend hyaluronic acid during the winter. It depends where you live, but keep that in mind with all of these sort of humectants like sodium PCA and certain peptides even. You put a bunch of proteins on your face and they tend to draw water to themselves. But again, the same problem occurs. They could also pull water away from the skin during the dry climate times like winter. L-lactic acid is a nice ingredient to increase moisture in the skin at 1%. Do not be exfoliating your skin with L-lactic acid and thinking you're increasing your moisture level.

I was Googling it and I saw they said, Google says that to "increase your moisture level, use alpha hydroxy acids." And I'm like, "No." It is true that L-lactic acid is a humectant in the skin and it does plump the skin in small quantities, but it is not true that you want to use that at any dose, I would say, higher than 5% because it'll melt your lipids off your face, it'll peel your stratum corneum away, and that will end up causing more dehydration. So it's a fine line, like so many things, it is a fine line when something is good for you and then it goes bad. The other part of moisturizers I wanted to touch on was emulsifiers. Pretty much all moisturizers have an emulsification system, meaning they have a water base and they have an oil base, and sometimes they're water dominant, sometimes they're oil dominant, but they end up putting emulsifiers into the formula to allow water and oil to be in the same formula together.

Obviously, you know that oil and water does not mix naturally, so as a result of that those emulsifiers can cause leaking of your lipid barrier. Your lipid barrier is holding water in, water's on the other side, on the inside of your epidermis. Inside your skin there's all this water, well, not that much water, but precious water we'll call it, precious and scarce. And the lipid barrier is there to keep that water from evaporating. With a cold wind that can happen quite easily. So the emulsifier, what it does is it weakens that lipid barrier and that ends up causing dehydration. I tend to lean towards oil-based moisturizers in the winter and more traditional moisturizers, creamy moisturizers, in the summer.

ask DR. BEN

PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

In our category, for example, [Enrich](#) is an oil heavy moisturizer, and I emphasize the word heavy, it's not going to be for everybody. And remember, I don't even subscribe to moisturizers myself because my vitamin A serums keep my lipid barrier intact and so I rarely experienced dry skin because my skin is well fed, it's turning over properly, and all of those good things. One of my favorite barrier lipids are actually phosphatidylcholine, which is the material we use to make our liposomes because it sits nicely on the skin, it has a UVB protection effect, it has a moisture protection effect, and it's nonocclusive. That's really important. But from a topical perspective, we have [Immerse](#), which has emu oil as the base. That has tremendous healing properties. That's a really nice moisturizer to take into the winter months. Then we have [Nourish](#), our organic avocado facial oil, which we also treat with frequencies to enhance the benefits of that product, and that's very well received, and I think is really nice during the winter months as well.

Where you want to be cautious though is if you're using [Correct](#), or [Renew](#), or [Replenish](#), or [Clarify](#), these are my liposome delivered serums, you don't want to mix them with Nourish or Immerse. You want to put those, Nourish and Immerse, on after those have settled. The reason why is because the liposome piece, the part that makes the ingredients penetrate six times better, that can be influenced if other lipids get in the way. So I like to put the liposome delivered serums on first. Lastly, I will bring up vitamin D and remind you that you hopefully got a ton of great vitamin D while you were in your summer activities, but don't forget that vitamin D, (I just recently learned actually, that there are vitamin D receptors in almost every cell in the body), that vitamin D is one of the leading rejuvenation hormones in the body. This is why people are always like, "Ben, what do you mean going in the sun makes your skin younger?" Because vitamin D is so misunderstood, and there's so much more to learn about it. Let's say you get a third of the benefits when you take vitamin D supplements. A third of what you get when you get vitamin D activated in your skin. So you want to do your best to get out and get that fall and winter sun as much as possible. You're going to be well clothed. So it really means a lot of sun. I really want to talk you out of sunscreens. Obviously, if you live in Arizona or places where the sun seems like normal sun, or Florida or something, that's different. But I really want to talk you out of using sunscreens during this time. Remember that the Osmosis serums have sun protective benefits, especially [Catalyst](#), even [Rescue](#) has some protective benefits.

For that reason, you want to allow the vitamin D to be activated in you. You want to think about getting vitamin D as much as possible. I promise you, it will make you younger in so many aspects in your body. And healthier, of course, because it reduces cancers like, I don't know, there's probably 20 cancers that it's known to improve when your vitamin D levels are at proper levels.

So that is my fall and winter advice. Take it to heart. I hope that you enjoy that.

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