

Southwest Skin and Cancer Institute Observational Study of Malibu C Vitamin C Serum

Arizona is the epicenter of skin cancer in the U.S. and ranks second in the world in the incidence of this potentially fatal disease. Prescott, with its thin mountain air, intense sun and population of active seniors from northern states, is a recipe for the inevitable.

Dr. Robin Fleck is a practicing dermatologist in Prescott. She sees many patients with skin cancer and pre-cancerous conditions, but she no longer believes in the inevitable. Dr. Fleck is board certified in dermatology and practices general, surgical and cosmetic dermatology. She established the Southwest Skin and Cancer Institute in Arizona in 2002 and sees a predominance of patients with skin cancer concerns. Dr. Fleck also is considered to be a leading medical expert on the subjects of skin cancer and skin health by the local media and health-related organizations.

"[At the Institute,] we see a predominantly elderly population, with Fitzpatrick Type One and Two skin, in a place that is sunny 300 days of the year," Dr. Fleck explained. "At least 80 percent of patients come in with sun damage and most of them have actinic keratoses. A majority have had other types of skin cancers as well.

"For the first few years, it was interesting that, although we live in an affluent area where the residents are meticulous about the use of sunscreen, we were still seeing a lot of cancers on exposed areas of the skin."

The problem, according to Dr. Fleck, was that in this beautiful mountain community, retirees are constantly outside enjoying golf, hiking, tennis and living very healthy lives — except for their continuous exposure to cancer-causing UVA rays. While Dr. Fleck and her staff strongly advised limiting exposure and wearing protective clothing and hats, the incidence of pre-cancerous conditions never seemed to diminish.

"Plus," said Dr. Fleck, "once a patient has finally had enough sun damage, they're going to keep getting cancers no matter what they do."

For the pre-cancerous actinic keratoses, the usual method of treatment is liquid nitrogen, literally freezing off the lesions. "I take off everything I see," said Dr. Fleck, "but patients would come back two or three months later and have the same number again."

Several years ago, Dr. Fleck was introduced to a cosmeceutical sales representative who told her about Malibu Wellness — the company that pioneered the topical use of fresh-dried vitamin C in 1985 — and about their Malibu C Vitamin C Serum, a 12 percent solution of fresh-dried, freshly activated L-ascorbic acid (vitamin C).

"I was familiar with some of the work done with topical vitamin C at Duke University back in the 1980s, so I decided to try the product as a protection, but also to try to help improve skin texture in my patients.

"After a year or so, I began to see an unexpected decrease in the number of actinic keratoses, an improvement in actinic elastosis from damaged collagen and better color in patients who used the serum twice a day and followed our instructions for protecting their skin."

The results led Dr. Fleck to incorporate the Vitamin C Serum into more of her Institute's treatment protocols and also to recommend the product to her patients for use at home.

"I explain to patients that this is an antioxidant that 'mops up' free radicals. I also emphasize that it has to be fresh," she said. Studies have indicated that a minimum 10 percent concentration of the L-ascorbic acid form of active vitamin C must reach the skin for noticeable benefits to accrue. The Malibu C Vitamin C Serum is unique in that the fresh-dried L-ascorbic acid crystals are not mixed with the rest of the ingredients until immediately prior to first application at which point the formula becomes active. The Institute staff normally activates the serum right before sending it home with each patient.

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According to Dr. Fleck, the form of vitamin C in the serum is a critical factor in its effectiveness for topical use. "I've tried a number of vitamin C creams and they don't work. This vitamin C serum is freshly constituted when you're ready to use it. When a premixed formula sits around, it soaks up oxygen which uses it up. Many products turn yellow or yellowish-brown as the vitamin C deteriorates. If the product is not white or clear, there's probably not going to be much activity."

While freezing off lesions has worked well as a maintenance protocol for precancer/cancer patients, Dr. Fleck believes that the results she has seen from the combination of the Malibu C Vitamin C Serum and her regular course of treatment may actually indicate a preventative effect.

"I find that I am needing to remove physically fewer lesions. I have several patients in their 70s and 80s who use the serum regularly and now have to come in less frequently for treatment. Conversely, I have seen no change generally in the number of lesions with patients who are not using the vitamin C."

Dr. Fleck has also observed improvement in the appearance of injured skin. "I've had two or three patients with brush burns or abrasions which healed with little or no scarring, in much less time than I would have imagined, when they used the C serum three times a day," she explained.

"I also had a young man with terrible actinic elastosis (yellowing) under his eyes. My treatment instructions were to use the Vitamin C Serum and wear his hat. Within two weeks he looked like a different guy.

"I now use the Vitamin C Serum post-operatively for wound healing and find that I am seeing fewer episodes of wound dehiscence (reopening and oozing) and less scarring with very little hypertrophic scarring." Dr. Fleck has also incorporated the serum into laser treatments, acne treatments (in combination with Retin A), rosacea treatment and even medical spa services, allowing her estheticians to eliminate the use of skin-damaging physical and chemical exfoliation techniques which she says can increase the risk of age spots and cancer.

Dr. Fleck has experienced noticeable improvement in patients with conditions as varied as melasma, radiation dermatitis, extreme pre-cancerous conditions and skin cancer itself.

She has found the contrasting results to be remarkable in patients on a Malibu C Vitamin C Serum protocol versus those who are not. She cautions, however, that practitioners should not expect immediate changes. To be successful, treatment and prevention of photo-aging and sun-induced diseases and damage require consistent, rigorous, monitored patient involvement and often difficult lifestyle changes.

Her patients seem to be up to the challenge. By her estimate, over half of her patients are using the Vitamin C Serum regularly, and her medical practice and spa sell close to 100 units every month. She's also seen people come in off the street just to buy the product after hearing about it from her patients.

Dr. Fleck's observations have led to her further exploration of the use of antioxidants such as vitamin E as integral components of skin treatment. But with all of the prescription and non-prescription formulas she uses, has used and observed, the freshly activated form of L-ascorbic acid stands out for Dr. Fleck as being universally beneficial, remarkable in its apparent improvement of her patients' conditions and yet almost a no-brainer in the sheer sense it makes to use it every day.

"I've been looking for a good formula vitamin C for ten years. With this product, I've seen the texture of the stratum corneum smooth out in just a couple of weeks. The skin loses sallowness and takes on a healthier color. I wish I could put everyone on this vitamin C."