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Retin-A

You have been given Retin-A to use for your skin condition. Retin-A is a medicine that has been around for about twenty years. Basically, it is a vitamin A derived cream capable of helping treat a variety of dermatological problems. The doctor has given it to you for the treatment of your _____. You are to start using it every 2-3 nights, then increase to every night as tolerated.

The most common side effect of Retin-A is skin irritation, which manifests as redness, dryness, stinging, and/or peeling. Most people will experience a small degree of skin irritation from this medication, which with continued use, will either resolve or become significantly less bothersome.

There are two “tricks” to minimize degree of skin irritation:

- A) A pea-sized amount is all that you need to cover the entire face. Therefore if you are treating just a particular area, i.e.: your forehead, you would need only a quarter of a pea-sized amount to cover this area. The more Retin-A you use will not help your skin condition any better or faster than the appropriate amount will, in fact it may significantly cause more skin irritation.
- B) Retin-A should be applied to “dry skin”. It is not necessary to wash your face before the application of this medicine; however, if you wash your skin prior to its application you should wait approximately ½ an hour after you wash before you put on Retin-A. By using Retin-A on wet skin you increase potential of skin irritation.

Another important fact about the use of Retin-A is that it can make you more susceptible to getting sunburn, even if you typically do not “burn” in the sun. This susceptibility occurs both from outdoor sunlight as well as from tanning salon lights. The tendency for easier sunburn can last for several weeks (even up to a month) after stopping the Retin-A, therefore, you cannot just stop the Retin-A and go sunbathing the next day without taking proper sun precautions. These precautions should include using a sunscreen, wearing a hat with a wide brim, and not “cooking” or “baking” in the sun. If you are being treated for acne or if you are prone to getting acne, then an appropriate sunscreen would be one, which is alcohol-based, those being ‘gels’ or ‘solutions’.

The above-mentioned side effects of Retin-A should not discourage you from using this excellent product. It just means that you need to tailor its use to your skin’s reaction to this medicine. For example, when going into any significant sun a sunscreen of AT LEAST an SPF 30 should be used, APPLIED OFTEN, and a HAT should be worn. If your skin develops any significant degree of irritation you should stop this product for a few days and then restart it but not use it as often. A moisturizer such a Moisturel Cream or Nutriderm can be used as well, preferably at a different time than when you put your topical medications.

If you have any further questions regarding Retin-A or it’s side effects please feel free to contact the office at the above listed number.