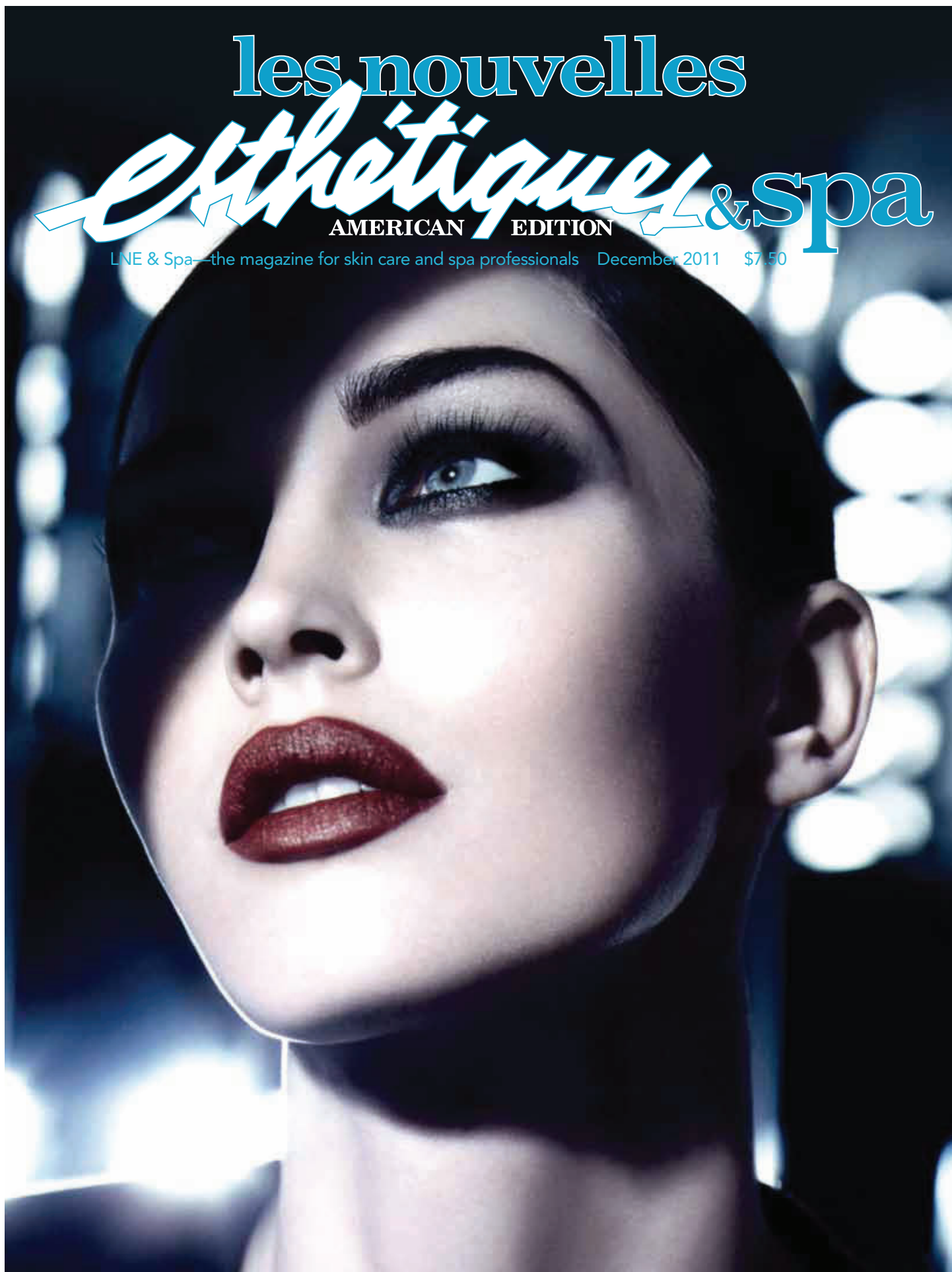


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TREATING SKIN CONDITIONS ON THE BODY

EACH DAY, TIME AND MONEY ARE SPENT on skin care and professional treatments for the face, yet the skin on the body is often ignored. Although the majority of the body is protected from UV exposure, this unique skin has needs all its own, making body-specific products and treatments a wise addition. Becoming familiar with the particular needs of the skin of the body can help to open a whole new dimension to your practice.

Body versus facial skin

From a physiological standpoint, the overall structure and functionality of the skin on the face and the skin on the body are similar, but their subtle differences play a significant role in how they are treated. Following are a few factors that should be considered when choosing professional and daily care products for the skin on the body.

The desquamation process is often disrupted due to sluggish cell turnover rates caused by chronic dryness, daily neglect and less exposure to the elements. Regular exfoliation is crucial when treating the skin on the body.

Epidermal density is approximately .60mm on the body and .12mm on the face, but it may vary by specific location. For example,

the skin on the back is typically thicker than skin on the chest. Thicker skin often results in increased keratinization and bacterial proliferation. Body products are typically formulated with higher percentages of biocompatible exfoliating agents, such as 12% lactic acid, to reduce keratinization and allow for proper penetration into the skin.

Sebum production is considerably slower on the body, as the largest concentration of sebaceous glands is on the face and scalp. The purpose of the sebaceous gland and the sebum it produces is to keep the skin hydrated. Because of this, products and treatments specifically designed for the body are usually formulated to offer more hydration than facial products.

Correcting conditions

When a skin condition appears on the body, patients don't always know where to turn for treatment. It is the responsibility of the clinician to inform patients on the benefits of body-specific products and guide them to the right option. Some of the more common skin conditions found on the body are atopic dermatitis (eczema), psoriasis, acne, hyperpigmentation and keratosis pilaris. ➔

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT THAN THE FACE?

BY JENNIFER LINDER, M.D.

ATOPIC DERMATITIS (ECZEMA) is a non-contagious, hereditary skin disease that typically occurs on the inside of the elbows, backs of the knees and the tops of the hands and face, but they can appear on nearly any part of the body. This particular condition is most often caused by stress or topical allergens, such as detergents or soaps. Flare-ups may be red, scaly, dry patches, which are often itchy and lead to cracked, weeping skin. Although there is not a cure for atopic dermatitis, topical treatments consist of alpha hydroxy acids, corticosteroid creams (e.g. hydrocortisone), heavy moisturizers and, in severe cases, prescription-strength antibiotic ointments.

PSORIASIS is an auto-immune disease that triggers skin cells to accelerate at an abnormal rate. A typical skin cell takes 28-30 days to mature and shed, while the skin cells in psoriasis patients take three to four days to mature. At this point, rather than shedding off, skin cells build up on the surface of the skin. Because the skin cells don't shed as they should, lesions often appear as red patches covered with silver scales. The patches are normally found on the scalp, elbows and knees but can also be found on other parts of the body. Treatment often con-

sists of corticosteroids to minimize inflammation and systemic medication to promote normal cell turnover rates. Psoriasis patients must be diligent in keeping affected areas clean and hydrated to decrease discomfort. Keratolytics, such as resorcinol, dissolve impacted cells to reduce buildup in psoriasis sufferers and can be used every day at low percentages (up to 2 percent) or in a professional product (up to 14 percent).

ACNE affects nearly 90 percent of the American population at some point in their lives. The hyperkeratinized skin on the body creates a perfect environment for p. acnes bacteria to proliferate. Consistent exfoliation, reducing inflammation, and keeping the area hydrated and free of perspiration are imperative to overcoming the breakouts. Salicylic acid is an effective topical keratolytic that can penetrate the follicle, reducing the impaction while controlling inflammation.

HYPERPIGMENTATION on the body most often presents as sun damage on the hands, arms, chest and back. However, post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation can appear anywhere that surface inflammation occurred. Professional treatments with a combination of lactic, kojic, malic and trichloroacetic acids (TCAs) are recommended. Daily care products with higher percentages of lactic acid (up to 12%), and products containing hydroquinone, undecylenoyl phenylalanine, and phytic, kojic and azelaic acids can be used to significantly accelerate results.

KERATOSIS PILARIS (KP) is characterized by small, rough-textured bumps around the hair follicle that most commonly occur on the backs of the arms, tops of the thighs and buttocks. This harmless genetic condition often appears in the winter and is caused by hyperkeratinization around the follicle, which forms a plug and leads to a rough texture. Moisturizing products that contain exfoliating agents, such as lactic and salicylic acids, and humectants such as glycerin, can be used to treat KP.

Products for the body

When it comes to facial products, patients will often purchase a special cleanser, serum or moisturizer without a second thought. However, when the skin of the body needs special attention, many patients are not aware that corrective, body-specific products are available. While basic over-

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the-counter products may be enough for those looking to maintain healthy skin, therapeutic body products may be necessary for patients suffering from specific skin conditions on the body.

Gentle exfoliation is a key to controlling many of these common skin conditions of the body. Lactic acid (up to 12%) hydrates, encourages exfoliation, reduces bacterial proliferation and inhibits melanogenesis. Resorcinol and salicylic acid reduce impactions and calm inflammation and itchiness, which is beneficial for keratosis pilaris, psoriasis, atopic dermatitis and acne.

Cleansers that are pH-balanced (pH 4-9) should be formulated with beneficial ingredients for the condition being treated. Products that are pH-balanced are important because they reduce the likelihood of irritation and dryness. Body cleansing products that contain ingredients like benzoyl peroxide or sulfur for acneic skin conditions, resorcinol for impacted skin conditions, and kojic and azelaic acids for hyperpigmentation are also good options. Patients should be aware that cleansing products that contain active ingredients only benefit the skin when the ingredients remain in contact with the skin long enough to stimulate change. Advise patients to allow the lather to remain in contact with the skin for at least two minutes before rinsing.

Moisturizing body products are also essential, as chronic dryness is common with many skin conditions on the body. Products designed to increase hydration should contain a combina-

tion of humectant ingredients to attract water moisture and occlusive ingredients to hold the newly found hydration within the skin. Glycerin, lactic acid, panthenol, urea, sodium hyaluronate and sodium PCA are among the most effective humectant agents. Effective occlusives include shea butter, jojoba extracts, silicones, hydrolyzed silk and plant oils.

Anti-inflammatory ingredients are also important to nearly all of the abovementioned skin conditions. Borage and evening primrose seed oils and pumpkin seed contain high concentrations of anti-inflammatory essential fatty acids. Salicylic acid and aloe vera are also excellent options for soothing sensitive and compromised skin on the body.

Sunscreen is just as important on the body as it is on the face. A broad-spectrum sunscreen should be applied to any areas exposed to UV rays—neck, chest, arms, hands, etc.—no matter the time of year. Zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, ecamsule, avobenzone, octisalate and octinoxate are all ingredients that can be found in broad-spectrum sunscreen products. Antioxidants such as caffeine and silybin offer an added layer of environmental protection.

Conclusion

Offering corrective body treatment options is an excellent added benefit to the patient. The skin on the body is slightly different than the skin on the face, allowing us to treat it differently. Body products and treatments should exfoliate, hydrate, protect and soothe inflammation, and may be specifically formulated to address skin conditions that often affect the body. Your patients are sure to appreciate this more holistic approach to skin care. ■



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