



The perfect partners

Dr Charlene Dehaven, MD, FACEP on adopting an integrated approach to fillers and topicals and why they are a “modern day marriage” made in heaven

The disciplines devoted to maintenance of youth and good health into our later years have made great strides in the last decade due to the scientific advances in dermatology, plastic surgery, and skincare and ongoing proliferation of information sharing within our industry. Furthermore, savvy consumers who also often lead a fast-paced lifestyle, desire minimal “down time”. They want not only to return to their daily life very quickly but to experience outstanding results. Meeting these great expectations is possible by combining the best of topical prescriptive skincare with effective procedures having very short recovery times. Indeed there is a noted growing shift in injectors taking a more holistic approach to treating patients below and above the skin’s surface level to meet this growing demand.

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THE ENGAGEMENT: WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED BY COMBINING TOPICAL PRODUCTS AND DERMAL FILLERS

In general, dermal fillers are placed to counteract the effect of gravity on the face and to replace volume. Dermal fillers are injected into tissue planes below the dermis and can change the sagging configuration of the face, as well as correcting “jowling”, deep expression lines, give midface support, and augment volume loss occurring with ageing. Fillers correct that tired look that is associated with the ageing face. Most dermal fillers are placed in sub-dermal areas and fundamentally do not affect skin health. Topical integration is therefore vital in order to create and sustain results for the patient.

Topicals are active in epidermis and dermis but do not penetrate the dermis. Injectable dermal fillers on the other hand, are usually placed below the deep dermis.

Topical formulations can improve skin texture, correct sallowness, treat hyperpigmentation and uneven skin tone, improve hydration, reduce fine lines, lessen pore size and improve cellular metabolism. This results in more youthful-appearing skin that emulates not only “young” but “healthy” skin. Topicals can also minimise and treat the visual and physiologic effects of various skin disorders, including acne, rosacea, seborrheic dermatitis and eczema in addition to improving the integrity of skin the injector is working with.

Improving overall skin health also gives the advantage of faster and better healing from the procedure. Healthy skin is able to heal faster because of improvements in protein synthesis that come with better cellular metabolism. With ageing, internal cell metabolism declines – in fact, by sixty years of age, we only make about one-half of the functional protein we made at 20 years. This and other issues of ageing skin can be dramatically improved with a carefully selected advanced skincare regime pre and post procedure.

PICKING THE RIGHT PARTNER: HOW TO SELECT THE RIGHT SKINCARE PRODUCT TO INTEGRATE INTO THE PATIENT JOURNEY

For optimal results, only topicals with the highest efficacy and proven capability should be used and carefully selected for the individual situation and desired outcome.

- Good physicians tend to use solid skincare brands that they have evaluated with due diligence and with which they have already experienced good results.
- The integrity of the formulation should be assessed. “Pharmaceutical grade” products, with the same quality and purity as those that are used in medicines are preferable in contrast to “cosmetic grade” ingredients, which are less expensive and are not certified to contain exactly what the label indicates and naturally are incapable at working at the active levels achieved by a better quality grade ingredient.
- Companies making very high quality skincare products, such as those recommended by physicians, usually assess their product’s capability with independent studies carried out on the “end-product” and not on individual ingredients. This type of study shows the consumer that the topical they remove from the bottle and apply should be effective.
- Equally clinical studies and independently verified testing should underpin the credulity of the selected formulas.

Pre procedure selection

Depending upon the state of health (or “un-health”) of the pre-procedure skin, various topicals may be recommended. Typical issues that can be markedly improved before the procedure – and which therefore maximise final results – may include;

1. Improvement of epidermal turnover (“resurfacing”)
2. Lessening of hyperpigmentation
3. Improving tone and texture
4. Decreasing pore size
5. Lessening wrinkles
6. Volumising skin
7. Improving cellular metabolism and overall skin vitality.

A correct generalisation is that results are maximised by helping the skin become as healthy as possible beforehand. If several of these goals are desired, it is usually not necessary to choose an additional topical for each quality. Many excellent skincare products are “multi-tasking” and, via very sophisticated formulation techniques, address many of these concerns at once. Multi-tasking products are also much more cost-effective for the practitioner and patient.

The before-and-after photos below were taken to illustrate results with a very simple topical regime, consisting of a single multi-tasking product plus cleanser twice daily for three months. Improvements are seen in hyperpigmentation, inflammation, texture, pore size, fine lines and wrinkles, as well as expression lines. This individual in the 55-60 year-old age range has achieved an improved state of skin health prior to beginning a chosen procedure. Overall results are expected to be considerably better than without the topical regime. Furthermore, after the addition of fillers, this patient can expect a beautiful skin surface as well as the architectural configuration of a younger face – this also serves to highlight that age is largely irrelevant when considering if a combined approach should be taken.



Before

After

PLANNING THE WEDDING: WHEN TO PREPARE FOR THE PROCEDURE WITH USE OF TOPICALS

In order to begin the procedure with the skin as healthy as possible, a good rule is “the sooner the better”. However, some patients decide to undergo a procedure although they have not previously adhered to a good topical regime. A longer time frame of topical use gives more resilient skin. At the present time, there is no fixed rule giving an exact time frame, although individual practitioners may have preferences. Certainly, using topicals for three months before the procedure should get skin ready and in good health. It is not unusual for patients to begin using topicals as little as two weeks prior to the procedure and still experience a better result than they would have otherwise.



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Even a few days before the procedure is better than not using topicals at all. Many topicals, due to sophisticated formulating, provide immediate as well as intermediate and long-term results. Therefore, improvements in the skin will build with time. Furthermore, improvements can be expected independent of age, skin type, or ethnicity. The complexity and number of products can be tailored to the individual patient's personality and whether they are a power user or a minimalist and indeed their budget.

HAPPY EVER AFTER... POST PROCEDURE

Although the specific regime may change, use of topicals should continue after the procedure. The use of innovative ingredients including growth factors, such as Copper Tripeptide-1, wound healers, such as Centella asiatica and anti-inflammatories, such as Olea europaea, will speed healing and equally a formula targeted at the specific

area being treated with the filler for hydration, skin tone and or volumisation will serve as an excellent maintenance line serving to increase patient satisfaction inbetween treatments.

SUMMARY

To defy gravity and its effects on the face, dermal fillers are the treatment of choice. For healthy, vibrant skin that supports the effective application of these fillers - topicals are required. This realisation that results are improved by combining filler and topicals also creates opportunities for practitioners to "bundle" the cost of a topical regime or product into that of the procedure to add value to the patient experience and opens doors to cross sell where appropriate. Embrace an approach that combines both fillers and topical skincare products for the best long-term result and the shortest recovery time for your patient. **AM**



>> **Dr Charlene DeHaven** is a board-certified physician in both internal medicine and emergency medicine, with an emphasis on age management and health maintenance. She serves as clinical director for Innovative Skincare® where she is responsible for evaluations related to product development, physician and professional education, collaboration with academic and medical institutions, and assists with ingredient identification and assessment. During training, she was awarded the Upjohn Foundation Award for Outstanding Resident. She has written and lectured internationally on topics related to skincare, ageing and wellness. Previously, she was a founding member of the Kronos Clinic and founder of the Longevity Institute specialising in anti-ageing medicine. Dr DeHaven has an extensive background in clinical medicine and also serves on the lecture faculty for the University of Washington, Department of Family Medicine.