

# Parents' Place

<http://parentsplace.lohudblogs.com/2007/09/05/547/>

September 5, 2007

## QUESTIONS FOR A DERMATOLOGIST DAD

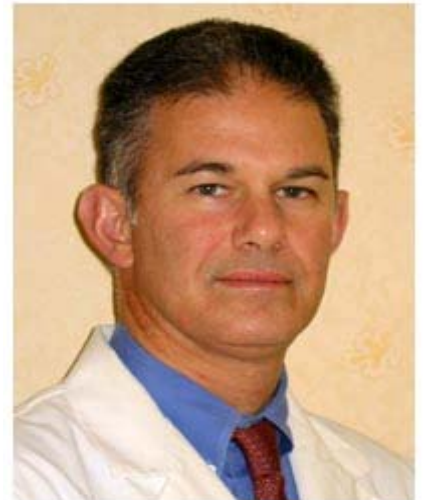
A baby's skin is beautiful, soft and oh-so-perfect. It's hard for us to imagine that in 30 or 40 years time our baby's skin will look like (gasp!) our skin, with all the freckles, moles and laugh lines to match. It turns out that the steps we take now to keep our kids' skin healthy can have long-lasting effects. That could mean fewer pimples in adolescence, fewer wrinkles in middle age and, most importantly, a reduced risk of skin cancer. To get tips for keeping children's skin healthy, I turned to a doctor who has experience caring for the skin of his patients — and his own kids.

Today's Questions & Parents feature, or Q&P for short, is with David E. Bank, director of the [Center For Dermatology, Cosmetic and Laser Surgery in Mount Kisco](#) in Mount Kisco. David, a resident of Mount Kisco, is also the father of Michael, 15, and Alex, 11.

**Q:** *What advice do you have for keeping children's skin healthy?*

**P:** There are many ways to keep children's skin healthy. Routines such as gentle cleansing and light moisturizing daily are good, but the most important thing to remember is sun protection. Using sunscreens, sun protecting clothing or even cutting down on the amount of sun a child might get in one day will help reduce problems of the skin that the child might have in the future.

**Q:** *How should a parent choose a dermatologist for a child? Is there a specialty in pediatric dermatology, or are all dermatologists trained to treat kids? What questions should a parent ask a dermatologist before making that first appointment?*



**P:** Most dermatologists see children, but it is still important to ask if that particular doctor does or does not. Yes, there are pediatric dermatology specialists, but these specialists are usually seen for uncommon or difficult-to-treat conditions.

**Q:** *At what age should a child have his or her first visit to a dermatologist, and what should happen on that visit?*

**P:** It is never too early to start seeing a dermatologist. At that visit, the doctor will ask questions about the history of the child's condition, examine the child's skin and then make specific skin care recommendations that can be used to treat the child's condition.

**Q:** *What's the skin care routine in your house?*

**P:** The skin care routine in my house, and the one I most recommend to other parents, is wash in both the morning and night, moisturize lightly and use sun protection. Also, if needed, as my 15-year-old son does, use acne products.

**Q:** *What kind of skin cleanser do you recommend for children and for teens? Is soap-and-water OK?*

**P:** The type of skin cleanser depends on the child's skin type. Over-the-counter gentle cleansers are a good place to start, but if the child's skin tends to be oily, then soap and water is OK to use.

**Q:** *How should parents of teens deal with acne? Are over-the-counter remedies OK? Any favorites? Any to avoid? How does your 15-year-old control pimples?*

**P:** Yes, it is OK to use over-the-counter remedies due to the fact that most of these remedies contain some of the ingredients that are contained in prescription medications, such as benzoyl peroxide, sulfur, and/or salicylic acid. Try to avoid anything that's going to irritate or dry out your child's skin to the point of being uncomfortable. This all depends on your child's skin type. Some over-the-counter product recommendations I would give are for [OXY](#), [Clearasil](#), and [Proactive](#). My 15-year-old uses a prescription topical cleanser and an antibiotic ([minocycline](#)) that is taken by mouth.

**Q:** *When we think of skin health, sunburn and cancer risk come to mind. Do today's children get that connection? What do you tell parents about keeping their kids safe from ultraviolet rays?*

**P:** Today's kids are starting to get the connection between sunburn and cancer risk, but unfortunately many teens still go "tanning" and don't wear sunscreen. When talking to parents about keeping their kids safe from UV rays, I try to get the parents to try several different types of sunscreen preparations such as sprays, creams, lotions, etc. Try to frame the question to the child. Ask, "Which one do you want to wear?" rather than, "Will you please put sunscreen on?" This might help your child figure out which sunscreen they like best and might make it a little easier and more enjoyable for the child.

**Q:** *As the calendar turns to autumn, do parents still need to be vigilant about sunscreen? What other skin protection strategies are important for winter?*

**P:** It is very important that parents remain vigilant about sunscreen, as it has been shown that the majority of accumulated sun damage is "incidental" sun that we get on a daily basis all year long. Also, it is important for parents to use moisturizers to help keep the skin healthy and hydrated.

**Q:** *Is it safe and appropriate for teenagers to receive cosmetic skin treatments? And which ones are popular?*

**P:** This is a very difficult to answer due to the fact that it depends on that particular child and the procedure that they want done. Many of our teens will have simple non-invasive cosmetic skin treatments, such as microdermabrasion and glycolic treatments, to clean out their pores (which are very popular). But this, of course, is very different and is not invasive compared to other procedures, such as liposuction. It all depends on the person and their own personal reasons for why they might want to do a particular procedure.

Thank you very much to David for sharing his knowledge by doing a Q&P! If you would like to be featured, or you know any parents who have expertise to share, please comment here on the blog or send me an e-mail at [jalterio@lohud.com](mailto:jalterio@lohud.com).

And, in case you missed them, here are links to [earlier Q&P features](#). There are interviews with more than a dozen moms and dads, including a dog trainer dad, financial planner mom, writer mom, mathematician mom, baker mom, drug counselor mom and pediatric dentist mom.