



## **A dermatologist's cure for the winter blues: Look better, feel better**

by Dr. Gary Goldenberg

It is very easy to forget about taking care of oneself during the busy months of fall and winter. With the holidays, cold weather and short days, it's no wonder that as many as 9 percent of the U.S. population suffers from the winter blues, known as seasonal affective disorder in the medical community. One way a dermatologist can help you with the winter blues is by making you look better.

In fact, botulinum toxins (Botox® or Dysport®) have been shown to improve depression symptoms. In a recent study, patients who received botulinum toxin in the forehead reported nearly 50 percent fewer depression symptoms on the Hamilton Depression Rating Scale. I have certainly seen this effect in my patients. It makes perfect sense that if one looks better, he or she feels better. But there is more to this story — experts believe that a relative change in facial expression from angry, sad, and fearful to happy and can produce emotional well-being beyond the cosmetic benefit.

Rosacea is a chronic disorder primarily of the facial skin that is characterized by redness, flushing and acne bumps. Hot liquids, spicy food, alcoholic beverages and stress can make rosacea symptoms worse. Several treatments can alleviate rosacea symptoms. These include V-beam laser treatment, chemical peels and blue light/photodynamic therapy.

The V-beam is a laser used to treat vascular abnormalities, such as redness of acne and rosacea. The laser works by dispensing an intense but gentle burst of light that selectively destroys the blood vessels without damaging the surrounding skin and tissues. Cosmetically sensitive areas, such as the face, neck, and the V of the chest can be easily treated. Pain is usually minor, and use of a topical anesthetic prior to treatment decreases discomfort as much as possible. More than one session is usually necessary to achieve optimal results.

A trichloroacetic acid (TCA) peel gently lifts and removes the surface skin layer preventing clogged pores, acne bumps and fine wrinkles and lines. The effects of a TCA peel may also extend beyond the skin surface — TCA stimulates the underlying dermal tissues to regenerate and strengthen collagen fibers. This results in fewer rosacea breakouts, smoother skin surface, removal of wrinkles and an overall more youthful complexion.

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) with blue light is a noninvasive method used to treat rosacea. A special light-sensitive medication called aminolevulinic acid (ALA) is applied to the affected area and allowed to remain there for 1 to 3 hours. Then the blue light is directed to the skin. For some patients, simply being exposed to blue light can help with rosacea. This treatment improves acne bumps, decreases pore size and improves the overall

appearance of the skin.

Fillers are another way to improve one's appearance. Fillers can be used to lift the creases that extend from the nose to the corners of the mouth (nasolabial folds) and marionette lines, rebuild the cheeks, fill hollows around the temples and improve the appearance of aging hands. Injection of fillers into the lips can decrease the appearance of lines around the mouth and increase the fullness of the lips. A "liquid facelift" combines injections of filler agents into several areas to restore the more rounded, youthful and full contour of the face. This approach is ideal for a younger patient, as well as an older patient who is seeking an alternative to facelift surgery. The entire procedure can be performed in the office with the aid of topical numbing cream.

Some of the popular fillers include Restylane® and Juvéderm® — composed of hyaluronic acid, which is naturally found in the body — and provide volume and fullness to the skin. The duration of effect from the hyaluronic acid fillers ranges from six months to one year in most cases. The volume enhancing effect is created by layering the filler in a series of fine tunnels within the undersurface of the skin.

Sculptra Aesthetic® is another injectable filler that is made from poly-L-lactic acid, which works to restore the structure and contour of the face. Sculptra stimulates the skin to produce collagen, filling and contouring the face over time. This often gives a more natural look than a surgical facelift. Sculptra is best used in combination with hyaluronic acid fillers and botulinum toxins. The "look good, feel better" motto is an important aspect of dermatology practice. By taking the time to improve your appearance, you can beat the winter blues this year, and every year. Ask your dermatologist what you can do to improve your appearance during your next visit.

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