DERMASCOPE

The Encyclopedia of Aesthetics

February 2011

Through the Decades

The Official Publication of Aesthetics International Association

AP Forum

Your Questions... Expert's Answers

Q "Methylsulfonylmethane (MSM) is a form of sulfur that is found in our living tissues. Are you familiar with this ingredient in cosmetic anti-aging products? What are the benefits or contraindications?"

~ Lucy Kaminsky; Toronto, Canada

A "Methylsulfonylmethane, also known as MSM, has been used for various treatment options particularly as it relates to treatment of arthritis. However, I have not uncovered any published research that supports any claims made about any benefit this sulfur compound has when applied topically. Nevertheless, it is used as a dietary supplement by many for its anti-inflammatory properties and its supposed effect on arthritis.

Sulfur is stored in every cell of the body, particularly in the hair, nails, and connective tissue of joints and skin, where it is an important structural protein component. I have read that the manufacturer of MSM sponsored two very small trials, but the results have not been published to the best of my knowledge. Until legitimate peer reviewed scientific studies supporting its benefit to the human body, especially with regard to anti-aging products, I believe that it is appropriate to be somewhat skeptical about the claims made.

I have read that Dr. Weil recommends its use for preventing scar tissue formation. He recommends that one waits until the incision is healed. Use a 70 percent solution of DMSO and apply it to the scar with absorbent cotton and let it dry. Apply the solution twice a day for a few weeks. You can also take MSM orally (MSM is available in capsules and powder for oral intake or in creams for topical use). The typical dosage is 3,000 mg daily (1,000 mg three times per day with meals). MSM is a close relative of DMSO. Take it for 10 days in addition to or in place of the DMSO. Visit www.drweil.com for more information.

I have also read it is used to treat rosacea. A substantial (246-participant) 12-week double-blind study found that a cream containing 1% Chrysanthellum indicum significantly improved rosacea symptoms as compared to placebo3. In another placebo-controlled study, a combination of milk thistle and methylsulfonylmethane topically applied by 46 subjects for one month appeared to be effective for rosacea. Reference: Berardesca E, Cameli N, Cavallotti C, et al. Combined effects of silymarin and methylsulfonylmethane in the management of rosacea: clinical and instrumental evaluation. J Cosmet Dermatol. 2008;7:8-14.

It is important for you to tell your prescriber, health care professional, or other health care professional that you are using methylsulfonylmethane (MSM). Although interactions with other drugs have not been noted, it is important that your health care provider is aware that you are taking this supplement.

You should discuss methylsulfonylmethane with your health care professional before taking it if you have any of these conditions:

- An unusual reaction to MSM, other medicines, foods, dyes, or preservatives
- Pregnant or trying to get pregnant
- Breast-feeding

Interactions between MSM and other medications are unknown. That is why you should be careful when mixing MSM with traditional medications. Although interactions with other drugs have not been noted, it is important that your health care provider is aware that you are using a topical MSM product.

Tell your prescriber or health care professional about all other medicines you are taking, including non-prescription medicines, nutritional supplements, or herbal products. Also tell your prescriber or health care professional if you are a frequent user of drinks with caffeine or alcohol, if you smoke, or if you use illegal drugs. These may affect the way your medicine works. Check with your health care professional before stopping or starting any of your medicines.

What should I watch for while taking MSM? If you notice any changes in your physical health while using methylsulfonylmethane, you should contact your health care provider.

Different brands of MSM might contain different amounts of active ingredient so be careful to use the same brand.

Products also vary in the other included ingredients, which may affect the efficacy, side effects, or feel of the product on your skin. Your health care professional or pharmacist can assist you in finding a product.

What side effects may I notice from receiving MSM? If you notice any side effects from MSM, tell your prescriber or health care professional as soon as possible. Other ingredients are included in the MSM topical products. Check the product label for other ingredients, as they may be the cause of any side effect."

~ Diana Howard, Ph.D., VP of Global Education, Research & Development, The International Dermal Institute and Dermalogica®

Q "I'm wondering if you have any knowledge regarding industry standards for independent contractors. I recently began working in a facility as such and I am bringing in all my own equipment as well as some or all of the materials and products, and doing the treatments. Can you give me any advice?"

~ Noelle Holiman; Jackson, Miss.

A "Most aestheticians who operate as an independent contractor either rent a room from another business owner and operate it as a separate business within a business. Or, they work on commission and are responsible for paying their own taxes and typically receive a 1099 form at the end of the year from the owner of the business where they practice as an independent contractor. They are not considered an employee of the spa and normally do not receive a w2 form at the end of the year. This may vary from state to state and you should check with your bookkeeper or accountant first. If you are renting a treatment room from another business owner, you are normally required to pay a monthly rental fee which is mutually agreed on by the both of you and is based on market value. If you signed a rental agreement, make sure that you read the rental contract thoroughly before signing it. If there is something that you want, for example, an option to rent for another three years after the lease has expired, this must be written into the contract. However, if you are working on commission and you are bringing in all your own equipment and products as well as many of your own clients, it is normal to expect about 50 percent to 70 percent commission. A lot depends on what the salon is willing to do for you in terms of helping you build and maintain a clientele. The more the salon invests in you, the greater their percentage will be. Whether you are working on commission or renting your room in a spa, it is important to have a written agreement about what can be expected from both you and the salon owner. This will eliminate confusion. It is a legal document and can protect the interests of you both. Consulting with a lawyer is always a safe bet."

~ Michele Phelan, co-owner of Concepts Skin Care Clinic in San Francisco, Calif. and the founder and president of Concepts Institute of Advanced Esthetics

Q "Do I really need to have a profile on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, et cetera? Also, I'm not really that Internet savvy; so what are some ideas for making them a useful business tool?"

~ J. Jackson; Austin, Texas

A "No one really needs a profile... its just part of a business' overall marketing plan. Since you are not 'really Internet savvy' I suggest that you attend some workshops on social media as well as taking an Internet course at a community college. This will give you the basic knowledge you need to get started."

~ Lake Louise, M.Ed., director of product development for Lotus Moon®

Submit questions or join discussions at aestheticsprofessional.com