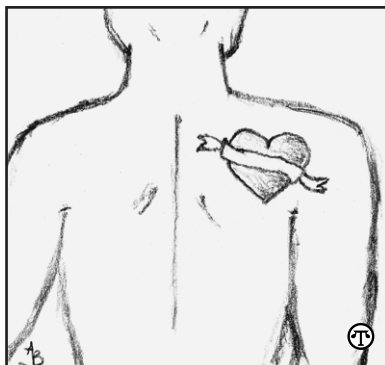


You Can Repair Skin Damage From Youthful Mistakes

(NAPSA)—As the saying goes, everyone has a past. For many in their 30s and 40s, being hip or cool as a teen or young adult meant getting a tattoo, having multiple body piercings or spending too much time in the sun trying for that perfect tan. But years later, those tattoos and piercings may not be appropriate in the workplace or in more conservative social circles and the ravages of excessive sun exposure can cause unsightly skin damage and greatly elevate your risk for skin cancer.

For unwanted tattoos, piercings and sun-damaged skin, dermatologists offer effective restorative procedures. However, the outcomes of tattoo removal procedures can vary depending on the size and colors of the tattoos, according to Rhoda S. Narins, MD, president of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery, “Large multicolored ones are difficult to remove and often require multiple treatments.”

Dr. Narins said lasers are most often used to remove tattoos but small tattoos may lend themselves to surgical removal. Excisions can be done to cut out the center of the tattoo with a scar in the center replacing some of the tattoo. One or more procedures may need to be done depending on the size of the tattoo. When multiple procedures are done, the existing scar and more of the tattoo can be



excised as the skin loosens. In the usual cases where repeated laser treatments are required, permanent changes in skin texture and pigmentation may occur at the former tattoo site.

Body piercings often heal naturally but they can be closed surgically too, according to Dr. Narins. “In a simple, in-office procedure, the dermatologist basically cuts out the hole and sutures it. When the wound heals, the piercing no longer is visible.” She advises that anyone contemplating a body piercing should make certain that sterile techniques are followed to minimize infection risk. “Infections can happen from even a simple earlobe piercing and sometimes a permanent abscess can result. So be careful when getting a piercing anywhere on the body.”

Perhaps the most common youthful excess that leads adults to seek restorative skin treat-

ments is excessive sun exposure and the aftermath—years later—of one or more serious sunburns that happened before the age of 20. “As you get older, you will have skin damage from unprotected sun exposure as a child or adolescent, evidenced most often by dark brown spots, sallow discoloration, dryness and wrinkles,” Narins said. “A tan indicates the skin has been injured from the sun’s ultraviolet rays that penetrate deeply, cause collagen and elastic tissue damage and greatly increase the risk of developing skin cancer. The good news is you can prevent future damage by applying sunscreen daily, rain or shine.” Several dermatologic surgery treatments are available to restore and reverse some of the damage created by the sun, ranging from chemical peels to laser treatments to topical creams that can fade away unsightly brown spots and brighten, tighten and smooth the skin.

Dr. Narins said it’s possible to change our past with many of the new treatments and devices developed by dermatologists. “Multiple options are available. Your dermatologist will know which one is best to use on your skin.”

For further information about medical and cosmetic skin surgery, visit asds.net, a service of the American Society for Dermatologic Surgery.