

COSMOPOLITAN

Only \$3.99

HOT SEX TONIGHT

THE #1 WAY TO BRING YOU CLOSER

GET-FIT SECRETS FOR A TIGHT BOD

Have You Been Lifting?

5 No-🙄-Fail Pickup Lines

DEMI LOVATO
Triumphs Over All the Bullsh*t!

Top-Shelf Beauty Under \$10

Enter to Win Demi's Bling

#JOBGOALS
Do What You Love, Get a Fat Paycheck

SEPTEMBER 2015

\$3.99



cosmopolitan.com

BEAUTY



Are Derms the New Therapists?

Something is driving young women into the dermatologist's office—and it's more than a mole check.

BY JESSICA MATLIN



FOR SOME WOMEN, a trip to the dermatologist is stressful. But when Elisabeth, 21, visits her dermatologist of six years, it's pure relaxation: Calming music fills the space, and she gets face time with the woman who, in addition to prescribing Elisabeth's acne medications, introduced her to meditation and yoga and advised her on how to navigate tricky friendships.

"One hundred percent of my breakouts have to do with stress from my personal life," she says. Being able to talk to her dermatologist about what's nagging at her has not only helped her skin, it's also helped her sense of self. Instances like this are increasingly common. While derms are in no way a substitute for mental health professionals, it's easy to see why some women are drawn to them—consciously or not—when the going gets rough.

UNDER THE SURFACE

"At the dermatologist, you often find yourself revealing that you don't like something about your appearance," says Vivian Diller, PhD, a psychologist who specializes in women's issues. What makes this different from confiding in a friend or, that old cliché, the BFF hairstylist? Derms, says Diller, have an air of authority. "You're hoping that this parental figure can say, 'I know what we can do!' and reach into their toolbox. They have a lot of power."

Derm visits are more frequent these days too. Rather than dragging themselves in for an overdue skin check or a funky rash, many women see derms as often as they see their colorists. "More and more people go regularly for cosmetic purposes—lasers, peels, Botox, fillers—so relationships develop...sometimes very intimate, dependent ones," says Diller. "I've heard women say, 'I walk out and feel like a different person!'"

"If you're not happy with your relationship, job, or self-esteem, it's easier to pick on your appearance, even go to a professional to 'fix it,'" says facial plastic surgeon Michelle Yagoda, MD.

Recently, Dr. Yagoda had a woman come in to discuss a light, antiaging peel, but the patient quickly began rattling off a laundry list of treatments she wanted, from facial injections to surgery. "I stopped her right there," says Dr. Yagoda. "I said, 'I see you're turning 30. How is that for you?' She broke down," she says. "She confessed she thought she'd be married with children by now, and her fiancé had just left her...for the second time. It became a therapy session." Dr. Yagoda asked the woman to work on herself—pursue hobbies, spend time with friends—and see if she still wanted work done in six months. (She didn't.)

Patricia Wexler, MD, a New York City dermatologist, is all too familiar with the "fix me" syndrome. It's usually when they have a wish list, she says. "That's when I say, 'This isn't about your face. You should stop working on your appearance and work on your mind. Then they'll tell me what's really bugging them.'"

THE COMPLEXION CONNECTION

The psych-skin link is a logical one. There's even a growing area of study around it: psychodermatology, which

addresses their patients' heads—not just address the surface—with a combination of treatments like skin meds, talk therapy, meditation, and anti-anxiety treatments, if necessary.

"A lot of my patients have skin conditions that are exacerbated by stress—acne, psoriasis, eczema, alopecia areata—which they've described as 'wearing their emotions on their skin,'" says Josie Howard, MD, a San Francisco psychiatrist who specializes in this field. One of the pioneers of the stress-skin field, Howard Murad, MD, a celebrity dermatologist, is disturbed by the hamster wheel of self-improvement that's driving so many into his office. "All they see on Instagram is people who look phenomenal, and they feel they can never live up to that expectation." The more you chase an ideal, the more miserable you become, he says. Cosmetic treatments won't make that go away.

It's great to have an open, confiding relationship with your dermatologist, but for women who don't have that, Dr. Wexler has a word of advice: Know when to stay home. "If you're depressed or in the

"IF YOU'RE NOT HAPPY, IT'S EASIER TO PICK ON YOUR APPEARANCE, EVEN GO TO A PROFESSIONAL TO 'FIX IT.'"

middle of a breakup, it's not the best time to make any changes [to your appearance]," she says. "Most likely, you won't be happy with anything at that point." Her suggestion: relaxing baths, new lingerie, even a life coach. "Not lip injections." ■

looks at patients from a dermatological, psychological, and psychiatric perspective. While there's no formal training for it in the U.S. (it's more established in Europe), these physicians try to get inside

