



by pat lam

Because skin care is taking a turn toward the medical field, the need for a more thorough prescription sheet is evident. As in most health care practices in which the patient is required to complete a lengthy form, skin care professionals need to acquire more in-depth information about their clients in order to maximize treatment results. A more complete profile of a client's lifestyle, product usage and, most importantly, the treatment products and steps used on the individual in the spa should be recorded on a prescription sheet. Understanding how a personal history, including health conditions, medication, nutrition, sleep habits and stress levels, affects the skin and body will aid skin care professionals in selecting the most effective treatments and providing the most appropriate home-care advice. The following information includes the important points that should be covered in a prescription form if a holistic approach to skin and body care is being considered.

The consultation

A consultation takes approximately 10–15 minutes, and many professional clinics require a small fee, which often results in fewer skipped appointments than if it were free. A good marketing strategy is to apply this charge as a credit toward the actual treatment. This serves as a motivation for the client to schedule an appointment.

A small consultation room located near the reception area produces a more conducive environment for immediately booking an appointment or purchasing products after the discussion, which helps to establish a professional relationship

at the onset. The room should be decorated tastefully with product displays, information about spa services and, if available, equipment used to examine the skin, such as a Wood's lamp. If the client is having only a consultation and has not booked a treatment at the same time, the prescription sheet can be partially completed and filed.

Following are some of the more significant questions to ask a prospective client during the consultation. Discussing issues relative to the client's background shows that you take more than a casual interest and promotes a strong professional relationship.

Data information. It is important to ask the client's permission to call their home or place of business in order to confirm or cancel appointments. Some people prefer that spa visits remain a private matter. Also, receive permission to send spa news and notifications about specials to their e-mail address.

Age. Be extremely tactful when asking this question. The answer serves as a helpful reminder when sending cards or gifts. This information helps to identify certain skin and body conditions that are found commonly among persons of that age group. For example, teenagers typically suffer from oily,

Editor's Note: This is Part I of a two-part series detailing the important questions for and functions of a spa prescription sheet. Part II will appear in the December issue of *Skin Inc.* magazine.

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Prescription

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acneic skin due to a hormonal imbalance, while crow's-feet or fine lines around the eyes usually appear in the late 20s or early 30s because secretion of the sebaceous glands begins to slow.

Referrals. This assists you in pinpointing where your advertising dollars are working the best.

Therapist. The name of the therapist conducting the consultation.

Personal history. Does the client have any health conditions? Asking this simple question can go a long way in anticipating the effectiveness of—or possible reactions to—particular treatments.

Contraindications.

Heart disorders. Avoid using any electrical devices if the client has metal implants or suffers from a heart condition unless medical approval has been given.

Asthmatic or epileptic. There are several precautions in the treatment of such medical conditions. Using equipment such as steamers may cause breathing problems for asthmatics. The skin care professional can take precautions by raising the level of the bed, ensuring that the client sits more upright and enabling the avoidance of steam directed into the nose. Steam time should be minimal for asthmatics. Great care should be taken when using any electrical equipment, such as high frequency, with epileptic clients. Avoid using indirect high frequency that requires the client to hold a glass electrode.

Metal implants or fillings. Services using electrical equipment, such as galvanic current and high frequency, can be uncomfortable.

Medication. If the client is on any type of medication, it affects the skin's pH level and can cause an abnormal reaction to any skin care preparation.

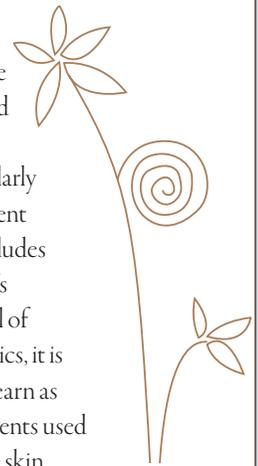
Many clients will attribute any breakouts on their skin to products applied during the service and are quick to blame the spa, but sometimes it can be the result of medication.

Skin diseases. In particular, psoriasis and eczema should be noted, and the affected areas should be avoided during treatment. Note suspicious lesions, such as herpes simplex, around the mouth that are highly contagious. If the client is having microdermabrasion or a chemical peel, let them know that these menu items can lead to the eruption of cold sores, but advise them to speak to their physician about acquiring medication to prevent it.

Blood pressure. There are several contraindications related to high and low blood pressure in skin and body treatments. Do not allow the client's head to become lower than the rest of their body when lying down. Encourage them to sit up a few minutes longer to recover from a reclined position. Heat treatments, such as hot steam, paraffin wax, whirlpool, sauna and underwater massage, may be contraindicated, as well.

Allergies. If the client has allergies, the skin often appears congested and irritated due to a low immune system. Constant sneezing leads to telangiectasia—particularly around the nose and cheeks—and the client probably will be on a medication that includes antihistamines, which will affect the skin's natural pH level. With the increased level of allergens in the environment and cosmetics, it is important for skin care professionals to learn as much as possible about the active ingredients used in cosmetics and how they may affect the skin.

Lifestyle behaviors. Smoking and alcohol consumption contribute a great deal to the skin's condition. Aside from having deep wrinkles around the mouth, a smoker's skin appears dull and devitalized with a gray tinge due to impaired oxygen intake in the upper layers. Excessive alcohol ingestion can result in blotchy skin with telangiectasia. It may feel warm or even hot to the touch.



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Exercise. If the client engages in outdoor winter sports, such as skiing or skating, recommend heavier protective creams to guard against extreme weather. During exercise that results

in heavy perspiration, instruct them to wash the toxins from their skin and body immediately after a workout. Strenuous exercise and swimming should be avoided for 24 hours after chemical peels or microdermabrasion.

Sunbathing. Freckles, sunspots and a leathery texture all indicate that the client enjoys sun exposure. Although it is commonly known to avoid direct rays in order to prevent skin cancer, skin care professionals have to remind clients regularly. Reiterate that sunscreen should be reapplied constantly—not only once—before going into the sun. Emphasize the ramifications of overexposure, and inform them that it is important to forgo direct sun exposure between 11 AM–4 PM. Furthermore, prompt the client to avoid the sun for 24 hours after any treatment, such as waxing, electrolysis, chemical peels or microdermabrasion.

Stress levels. Stress is a part of everyday life, but extreme levels can result in skin disorders such as small, flat red lesions with no oils inside them. Deep facial lines—particularly between the eyebrows—also are strong indicators. Other high-anxiety behaviors include the inability to relax throughout the treatment, hunched shoulders, curled toes, fast talking and eyes staring up at the ceiling. Avoid speaking with the client, and try to relax them with soft lighting and soothing music, along with a smooth-flowing facial or body massage.

Sleep. Does your client get enough sleep? If not, their eyes and skin will appear tired and sluggish. Adequate rest is crucial for a clear, healthy complexion.

Ethnicity. There are varying degrees of skin tones in black skin—some with yellowish undertones, others with greenish to grayish tones.

Previous treatments. Skin care professionals should be aware of the quality and reputation of competitive spas in their respective cities. If your client has visited a reputable spa, you will have to work harder to impress them. Product knowledge, nutritional guidance and stress management can serve to win over the individual to your facility. It also is important to find out whether a client has experienced any side effects from past treatments.

Products used. By learning what products their clients use, skin care professionals can educate them on the benefits of using their spa's products.

How does your skin feel in the morning? The answer to this simple question can be a very good indicator of the client's skin condition. If it feels oily, it is very probable that oily conditions exist. Combination skin is normal in the 20–30 age range. However, if the skin feels tight and dry without any creams, it probably is dehydrated.

Nutrition. These questions should include: “Do you eat three meals daily?” “Do you eat fast foods regularly?” “Do you get four to five servings of fruits and vegetables daily?” “Do you drink at least eight glasses of water daily?” “Do you consume fish and beans or soy foods?” “Do you eat whole grain foods?” “Do you take supplements?” Knowing the dietary habits of the client enables the skin care professional to provide nutritional advice to improve eating behavior. Obtaining this knowledge is vital to elevating the health and true wellness of your clients.



Having collected sufficient personal history about the client, the skin care professional now should begin the most important part of the consultation: the skin examination. The prognosis of this in-depth examination will determine the treatment objective or goals, and is guided primarily by the client's main concerns. Find out about the importance of the skin-examination portion of a spa prescription sheet in the second part of this article, which will appear in the December issue of *Skin Inc.* magazine. ✕