





Delicate

DEALINGS

UNDERSTANDING **SENSITIVE SKIN**

BY KRIS CAMPBELL

Sensitive skin is a condition the skin care professional sees every day in the treatment room. In a study published in the International Journal of Dermatology, 44.6 percent of individuals polled stated they had sensitive skin.¹ As sensitivity levels rise due to various factors, it's important to determine exactly where your client's sensitivity comes from before deciding on a specific course of treatment.

Skin sensitivity always comes with inflammation, whether visible or not. Environmental factors, reactions to cosmetics or fragrances, aging, medications and health challenges can all contribute to sensitive and ultra-sensitive skin. These factors can lead to symptoms such as stinging, itching, burning and/or visible skin changes like redness, dryness, scaling, peeling, bumps, acneic breakouts, hives or hyperpigmentation.² Most people with sensitive skin don't seek help from a professional until the discomfort becomes unbearable, so it's essential for professionals to understand how to address it once a client comes to see you about it. (See *sample client questionnaire on page 19 as an example of how to determine the cause behind a client's sensitive skin.*)



FACTORS BEHIND SENSITIVE SKIN

+ ENVIRONMENTAL

Exposure to extreme cold, heat or chemicals can cause skin sensitivity, as living in harsh climates or weather that swings from one extreme to another can result in inflammation and dehydration. This is why knowing where a client works or spends their time can help you identify their source of sensitivity.

For example, a client who works in a factory where they are exposed to irritating chemicals may not benefit from aggressive treatments such as peels or lasers. Their environment is a contraindication, and their skin would have difficulty healing from these procedures.

+ FRAGRANCE

Most people don't suspect that fragrance could be behind their skin irritation because these ingredients don't cause skin to become inflamed. However, the skin below the surface could be suffering from collagen breakdown resulting from a reaction to the fragrance. When collagen is compromised, the skin has a reduced ability to fight environmental damage or heal properly.³



When booking appointments, clients should be asked if they have any sensitivity to fragrances so you can be prepared with the right products and atmosphere in the treatment room. If possible, schedule these clients at the beginning of the day before an aroma builds up from other services. Consider carrying an alternative line of skin care that has little or no natural fragrance to accommodate fragrance sensitive clients.



Note that clients who are pregnant or undergoing cancer treatments may have a temporary sensitivity to fragrance.

+ COSMETIC INGREDIENTS

New skin care ingredients enter the market daily, as manufacturers use more natural ingredients for color and preservatives while promising to fulfill consumers' ultimate skin care goals. Many food ingredients are now used for anti-aging, calming and even to provide natural color. These exciting developments in skin care formulations make it all the more important to ask clients about known allergies, including food.

Cosmetic Intolerance Syndrome (CIS) is another issue to consider with sensitive clients. CIS is a skin condition that can result from a combination of factors. The overuse of topicals on a daily basis, along with regular use of acids or physical exfoliation can compromise the skin barrier. Active ingredients penetrate deeper and thus can cause rashes and inflammation. For clients with CIS, stay away from all acids and exfoliation. The goal with these clients must be to calm, hydrate and repair the barrier.

+ HEALTH-CHALLENGED SKIN

An individual's skin is considered health-challenged when it experiences reactive skin conditions resulting from internal diseased states and/or medications to treat these diseases. This factor cannot be overlooked, as close to 70 percent of all Americans take some sort of medication daily.⁴

Ask the right health and medication related questions on your client intake form in order to "do no harm." For example, a client may not think it's important to tell you they take antidepressants, however many such drugs can cause skin rashes and sensitivity.

+ AGING

Baby boomers make up almost 15 percent of our population, a percentage expected to increase in years to come. While this group seeks out the latest anti-aging discoveries, their skin physi-

ology has changed with age, causing them to be more sensitive to certain treatments and products.

The epidermis of aging skin has a slower cell turnover and a reduced production of lipids, which causes more dryness, while the dermis experiences a reduction in collagen. A professional can still work on wrinkles and spots for the aging client by using less aggressive ingredients like retinaldehyde or types of vitamin C specifically developed for sensitive skin.



Ask the right health and medication related questions on your intake form in order to "do no harm."





TREATMENT AND HOME CARE

Keeping the skin's barrier in proper working order is key for clients with sensitive skin. Whether compromised due to health challenges or the use of aggressive products or treatments, the skin's barrier needs to undergo a repair process. The proper steps must also be taken to protect it against future damage.

Ingredients such as ceramides (1,3,6-11), natural waxes (candelilla and carnuba), oils with high fatty linoleic and alpha-linoleic acid content and probiotics can all be beneficial to helping restore barrier function.⁵ Also encourage sensitive clients to apply sun

protection, as the sun's rays can cause skin damage and impairment to the immune system. Avoid products that are too active or aggressive in treatments and home care recommendations.

Hydration is also key to treating sensitive skin, starting with proper water intake. Topically, use and recommend ingredients that help maintain the skin's moisture levels, such as hyaluronic acid and products that can provide a shield to keep the levels of moisture protected.

Advise the sensitive client to use microfiber towels on their skin and linens with a high thread count. They

should also refrain from taking excessively hot or cold showers, in order to avoid inflammation.



Kris Campbell is founder and managing director of Hale & Hush, a skin care line dedicated to sensitive and health-challenged skin. She trains, writes for trade publications and speaks at trade events on a variety of subjects including ingredients and health challenges. Campbell has worked for an FDA cosmetic lab and helped clients in creating their brands. She currently formulates for Hale & Hush.

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SAMPLE CLIENT INTAKE FORM

MEDICAL HISTORY

» *By adding a couple additional questions to the standard Intake Form, the skin care professional will have information regarding where a client's skin conditions come from. This can more effectively help you determine the best treatment plan to achieve their desired skin care results. You must be aware if your client has any of the conditions listed below, as they all have possible connections to various skin problems. Contraindications to these medical issues and medications may arise from treatments or products.*

Are you currently under the care of a physician? YES NO
If yes, for what?

Are you currently under the care of a dermatologist? YES NO
If yes, for what?

Do you have any of the following medical conditions?
Please check all that apply.
Do you have any other health problems or medical conditions? Please list.

- Cancer
- Herpes
- HIV/AIDS
- Seizure Disorder
- Thyroid Imbalance
- Rosacea
- Diabetes
- Arthritis
- Keloid Scarring
- Hepatitis
- Blood Clotting Abnormalities
- Skin Cancer
- High Blood Pressure
- Frequent Cold Sores
- Skin Disease / Skin Lesions
- Hormone Imbalance
- Any active infection

Please list:

Have you ever had an allergic reaction to any of the following? Check all that apply and describe the reaction you experienced.

» *Food is an important factor, as many natural and organic items are now put into skin care products along with clean colors and fragrance.*

Food (if so, what type)?

- Latex
- Aspirin
- Lidocaine
- Hydrocortisone
- Hydroquinone or skin bleaching agents

Have you ever had a skin reaction to a fragrance, mental reaction or dislike for a fragrance? If so, which fragrance?

» *Many people are allergic to fragrance or offended by specific types. This is important to know so you can use a fragrance free product or schedule them at the start of the day before using fragrances that may linger in the treatment space.*

MEDICATIONS

Are you taking any oral medications? YES NO

If yes, please list:

» *It's important to know about clients' contraindications for products or services. For example, if they are on a medication that causes photosensitivity, avoid aggressive treatments like microdermabrasion or chemical peels.*

Have you ever used Accutane? YES NO

If yes, when did you last use it?

» *Accutane is contraindicated with many treatments and products.*

Are you taking any topical medications? YES NO

If yes, please list.

» *Note any medications that contraindicate with products and therapies.*

What, if any, herbal supplements do you use regularly?

» *Herbal supplements can also cause skin conditions such as rashes and inflammation.*

MORE HISTORY

Have you used any of the following for hair removal in the last six weeks?

- Shaving Waxing Electrolysis
- Plucking/Tweezing Stringing Depilatories

Have you had any recent tanning or sun exposure that changed the color of your skin?

YES NO

Have you recently used any self-tanning lotions or similar treatments?

YES NO

» *Contraindications with certain treatments and products are associated with hair removal.*

Do you form thick raised scars from cuts or burns?

YES NO

» *This may lead to contraindications with more aggressive peeling and extractions as well.*

Have you ever had hyperpigmentation (darkening of the skin), hypopigmentation (lightening of the skin) or marks after physical trauma?

YES NO

If yes, please describe:

» *Knowing where, when and how pigmentation occurred will help determine how aggressively you can treat skin and if you can use certain types of products, as you could do more harm in some cases.*

Are you pregnant or trying to become pregnant?

YES NO

Are you breastfeeding?

YES NO

Are you using oral contraception?

YES NO

» *These factors can be contraindicated with hair removal for some treatments and/or products.*

LIFESTYLE FACTORS

Where do you live?

List any hobbies

What is your profession?

» *A client's skin may be affected by their surroundings. Knowing their occupation, climate exposure or regular hobbies will help you soothe their skin as well as protect it, as they are going to continually expose the skin to those conditions. For example, if a client lives in extreme cold, skis frequently or is regularly exposed to harsh weather and sun, you should pick products and treatments that hydrate or provide sun and barrier protection. An individual who works in a kitchen over a hot stove may have inflamed skin, so you would avoid products that contraindicate with this condition.*