



TikTok Trends in Dermatology and Their Clinical Evidence

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Introduction

TikTok, a rapidly growing social media platform, is a hub for diverse information, with dermatology being a popular topic. The top five dermatologic conditions discussed on TikTok include acne, alopecia, warts, cysts, and eczema⁷. Notably, 25.8% of these videos come from board-certified dermatologists, who contribute evidence-based medical knowledge and counteract misinformation about popular products⁷. Despite this, misinformation on treatments can easily spread, with patients sharing potentially harmful homemade remedies. Board-certified dermatologists' educational videos on TikTok are 50.1% more likely to be reliable than other sources, highlighting their crucial role in providing accurate information⁷. Encouraging dermatologists to use TikTok for education and engagement is essential. We present 6 TikTok skincare trends and provide an evaluation of their clinical evidence.

Skin Cycling

- A four-day evening skincare routine consisting of a chemical exfoliant night, a retinol night, and followed by two nights of recovery.
- The goal of this schedule is to increase the effectiveness of each active ingredient while reducing skin irritation and inflammation. Skin cycling also enforces routine since these products produce better results when used consistently.
- Skin cycling is recommended for people introducing chemical exfoliants and

retinoids into their skin care routine. This is a routine that can be built upon by increasing the frequency of active ingredients used or lessening the days for recovery.

- While there are research studies on the effectiveness of each product in this routine, there are no studies on the concept of skin cycling. There are also no studies backing up claims that skin cycling may reduce negative side effects of products while improving the skin barrier.

Glycolic Acid as Deodorant

- Glycolic acid is an alpha-hydroxy acid that can be used as a chemical exfoliant for the treatment of acne-prone and photoaged skin.
- A TikTok trend that involves applying glycolic acid to the axilla before bedtime a few times a week to minimize odor and hyperpigmentation.
- Glycolic acid peel treatments have been shown to be effective in treating post-

inflammatory hyperpigmentation and melasma. However, there are no studies on the effectiveness of glycolic acid in treating axillary hyperpigmentation and odor.

- Glycolic acid concentrations up to 20% have potential side effects such as stinging or burning, pain, and erythema.
- Higher concentrations of glycolic acid are associated with a higher and more frequent risk of side effects.

Slugging

- Slugging refers to applying a petrolatum-based ointment as the last step in an evening skincare routine.
- Petrolatum is a hypoallergenic ingredient that moisturizes the skin while repairing the skin barrier and decreasing the appearance of fine lines.
- Of the top 50 videos on slugging shared and viewed on TikTok, only 16% were created by healthcare professionals, including dermatologists, dermatology residents, emergency medicine physicians, and a nurse practitioner⁶.

- Although petrolatum is non-comedogenic, slugging can trap dirt, debris, and oil on the skin, causing and/or worsening acne. Slugging is therefore not recommended for all skin types.
- Petrolatum is an occlusive moisturizer that forms an oily barrier on the skin. This allows slugging to increase the potency and absorption of products used underneath, such as retinol, leading to irritation.

Facial Taping

- Facial taping involves the use of adhesive bandages to create the appearance of a facelift. Social media users suggest that overnight taping limits facial expressions during sleep and thus reduces wrinkles.
- Despite claims on TikTok, there is no evidence supporting long-term wrinkle

reduction or prevention through facial taping. The effects are temporary and only last while tape is applied.

- Risks include contact dermatitis, erythema, and local irritation due to adhesive, with the periorbital skin being particularly vulnerable.

Collagen Supplementation

- Collagen is a vital structural component in connective tissue, providing support and integrity.
- Aging results in a reduction of collagen density in the dermis and slowdown in dermal fibroblast activity, leading to impaired skin elasticity and function.
- There is a growing interest in oral collagen peptide supplementation for skin health on social media¹.
- Placebo-controlled clinical trials demonstrate the positive effects of

oral collagen supplementation. Results from a 12-week study with 106 women show improved skin hydration within 8 weeks, increased collagen density within 4 weeks, and a reduction in collagen fragmentation².

- Kim et al.'s clinical study on low molecular weight collagen peptide supplementation reveals significant improvements in skin hydration and parameters of skin wrinkling after 12 weeks.

Gua Sha

- Gua sha is a traditional Chinese medical practice involving skin scraping with a coin or spoon. It gained popularity in the West through social media, evolving to use a polished jade stone moved in upward and outward motions.
- Gua sha claims benefits such as reduced inflammation, decreased wrinkles, and improved blood circulation. However, a study revealed that only a small percentage of websites supporting these claims cited scientific studies and rarely quoted dermatologists³.
- Scientific studies suggest that scraping

therapy, a component of gua sha, enhances blood circulation and energy metabolism⁸. The study observed a statistically significant increase in microcirculation within 90 minutes after scraping therapy⁸.

- Wong et al.'s mouse study focused on the upregulation of heme oxygenase-1 (HO-1) in response to gua sha therapy. Increased HO-1 gene expression led to an antioxidative response suggesting potential anti-inflammatory effects.
- There are no studies that suggest gua sha can increase the firmness or tone of facial skin.

Discussion

Skincare trends on TikTok are popular and rapidly changing. These trends can both be beneficial as well as potentially harmful to the skin. Since content creators who differ in expertise and profession share videos on TikTok, there is a potential for the spread of misinformation about the effects of each skincare trend. In addition, many of these skincare trends are not supported by scientific evidence and research. Board-certified dermatologists can use TikTok as a platform to educate people on skincare products, including proper use and adverse effects. They can also provide reliable information while combating misinformation on the social medial platform.

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