

Dermatologist explains light therapy for skin

April 24 2024, by DeeDee Stiepan, Mayo Clinic News Network



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Dermatologists advise their patients to avoid harmful ultraviolet light, which can cause skin damage, photo-aging and skin cancer. But they also may prescribe light therapy to treat certain skin conditions. Light therapy is a treatment that uses different wavelengths of light to treat various skin conditions.

In this Mayo Clinic Minute, Dr. Dawn Davis, a Mayo Clinic dermatologist, explains the different types of light therapy, what they treat, and if over-the-counter light therapy devices are safe and effective.

"Every color of the rainbow has a different wavelength of light," says Dr. Davis. "And we have found, through research and [dermatology](#), that certain visible light colors, when they are concentrated and intensified, can have some benefit to the skin."

Dr. Davis says blue light therapy done in a medical setting works to help treat acne by causing an oxidative reaction on the skin.

"Red light can have some similar anti-oxidative or oxidative properties on the skin, which can be used sometimes to treat acne and also photo-aging," says Dr. Davis.

But what about [light therapy](#) outside of a dermatologist office, such as [red light](#) masks and wands sold over the counter? Dr. Davis says, before you spend your money on these products, which may not be effective or safe, talk to your dermatologist.

"If you have interest in using an over-the-counter red or pink light, or a prescription blue light from a dermatologist's office, please talk to your local dermatologist about its potential uses for you and your skin and your health," says Dr. Davis.

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Citation: Dermatologist explains light therapy for skin (2024, April 24) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-04-dermatologist-therapy-skin.html>

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