



TRANSCRIPT

Stories About Skin – Skincare Gone Crazy

Dr Laxmi Iyengar: Welcome to *Spot Diagnosis*. My name is Dr Laxmi Iyengar, and I'm a GP and education fellow at the Skin Health Institute, a world-renowned centre of skin excellence located in Melbourne, Australia.

We would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land on which we are recording this podcast today, the Wurundjeri people of the Eastern Kulin Nation, and pay our respects to elders past and present, and extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may be listening.

Well, Spotters, we have something very different in store for you today. Have you come across the new pandemic of tweens going wild and out of control in Mecca and Sephora? Little princesses, piling on their faces with makeup and putting toxins on their skin without understanding their consequences? I know I have, and I live with them. I am looking forward to a discussion today on the topic of Skincare Gone Crazy, with an expert panel to shed light on the harmful effects of everyday skin remedies such as retinol and to understand what a good skincare routine might be, as recommended by dermatologists.

Laxmi: Today's podcast will be hosted by Kim Wilson. Kim is a freelance health journalist and content creator with more than 25 years' experience in news, features, and lifestyle reporting. Kim also recently launched an episode for *Spot Diagnosis*, Stories About Skin Atopic Dermatitis, where she skilfully captured the patient experience of eczema, which on reflection, is one of our most outstanding episodes. Welcome, Kim.

Kim Wilson: Thanks, Laxmi. In this episode, we take a deep dive into the tween obsession of beauty and skincare routines currently sweeping the Western world.

It's a minefield for parents trying to navigate their way through the overwhelming peer pressure and pest to power from their children over the latest must-have bronzing drops, scented face masks, eye creams, and serums. It's not just parents who are becoming increasingly concerned about the impact these products are having on young people's skin, their self-esteem, and body image. Dermatologists and psychologists are seeing the consequences of this unhealthy skincare phenomenon starting to emerge in their daily practice.

We hope this episode helps parents and practitioners with valuable insights and up-to-date information from leading clinicians as we discuss the facts, dispel the myths, and share meaningful advice. We welcome Mei Tam, a consultant dermatologist at St. Vincent's Hospital Department of Dermatology and the Skin Health Institute, for 25 years, with special interest in contact dermatitis.

Dr Katherine Armour is a medical and cosmetic dermatologist working in private practice and the public hospital system in Melbourne. She is widely published in the medical and cosmetic dermatology literature and has worked in the skincare industry for the last 16 years, consulting to numerous skincare companies and Dr Siu-Ying Kwok is a consultant psychiatrist working in public and private practice with a special interest in eating disorders and working with young people. Currently, she holds appointments at St. Vincent's Hospital working at the body image and eating disorders treatment and recovery service, as well as the Melbourne Clinic Professorial Unit.

Mei, how serious is this tween obsession with skincare products, and what consequences are you seeing in your practice?

Dr Mei Tam: Problem with this obsession is that 10 years ago we found that most people were playing with toy cosmetics and toy skincare, and they would use it now and again. However, currently, there's 10 steps every day, twice a day, weekend care that they have to go through to actually achieve their perfect skincare regime. They are influenced by all these skinfluencers in TikTok, and they are persuaded to buy and purchase many items to apply on their skins on a daily basis.

We find that they are wrapped up in this whole process, to the exclusion of being sensible about using just three products such as cleanser, moisturiser, and sunscreen. Their skin is already perfect, they should be hydrated, they should be line-free, they should be blemish-free, yet they are putting on things that are not age-appropriate for themselves.

Kim: What consequences are you seeing in your patients that are coming through the clinic?

Mei: The consequences are most of them get irritant dermatitis. The retinal eye mask that they getting that's recommended for Sephora tweens causes irritation because it causes peeling on the skin, and this is supposed to generate more collagen and to achieve an anti-aging effect. However, this is creating problems with their thin, sensitive skin with poor barrier and compounds by putting more things on, including fragrances in their serums, moisturisers, setting mists that they have to apply on.

Kim: You finding parents are bringing their children and tweens into your clinic as a specific result of the application of these products?

Mei: Yes, they are. They come in not only with the irritant contact dermatitis, but they do also develop allergic contact dermatitis, which is even more serious, which adds on to their problem with atopic dermatitis. Then, they also have occlusive problems where they block up their pores or clog up their skin, and they end up with acne, they end up with perioral or periorificial dermatitis, and they get seborrheic dermatitis, which is oil-induced skin yeast development in the skin and it makes the skin look red and flaky. They pile on more oil, which feeds the yeast more and you end up with a terrible situation where the skin is inflamed.

Kim: It sounds like the products are actually having the opposite effect to that which they were hoping to achieve.

Mei: Oh, definitely. They upset their skin barrier and the pH balance of their skin, and it really throws the skin out of balance.

Kim: Katherine, you've worked in the skincare industry for more than a decade. Why do you think this phenomenon has emerged, and what concerns do you have about it?

Dr Katherine Armour: I think the phenomenon has emerged because all of these 'Get Ready With Me' videos and the shelving, the signage, et cetera, in Sephora and Mecca are very aspirational for young people.

Just like TikTok, watching Pixie Curtis and other skinfluencers get ready, it's that dopamine hit, and us adults are obviously vulnerable to it when we imbibe social media. I think our young people are even more vulnerable to that. That's where they do their research and where they get this social education from these days. It's also now very available and very accessible to young people. It's aspirational, and also, it's the volume of times per day they're being fed this messaging is also quite problematic.

You can go down a rabbit hole and see dozens and dozens and dozens of clips, videos, reels per day reinforcing that you need a 10-step Korean skincare regime to achieve glass skin, or you need X lipstick and you need to apply your eyeliner like this. It's all around us, and it's all around our young people. I see exactly the same problems in my practice that Mei has already outlined. I think, particularly, the irritant contact dermatitis and periorificial dermatitis are really problematic.

Mei is by far and away the expert in this over myself. Every single time you apply a different product, it's going to contain your active ingredients, it's going to contain preservatives, and often, unfortunately, a whole ream of fragrances. All of those are potential causes of A, irritancy, and B, potentially allergy. The other real concern is that a lot of the products that tweens and teens are purchasing, particularly in the area of skincare, they're actually not designed for their skin. They're designed for those of us who need to treat our facial brown spots or our fine lines and wrinkles.

They're designed to stimulate new collagen; they're designed to quite aggressively sometimes exfoliate sun-damaged skin. Even the products that are designed for tweens, I think they're actually particularly problematic because they are full of fragrances and colouring, and numerous preservatives to make them appealing for tweens.

They're all Glow Recipe and similar brands, they smell amazing, they smell like bubble bath. Then, these people with young vulnerable skin are applying them and often occluding them under these other layers. It's a minefield really.

Kim: Are they potentially causing long-term skin issues by using these products at such a young age, or is it something that if they stop using it, their skin will return to a healthy state?

Katherine: I don't think at this point we would expect to see long-term problems unless of course, we're talking about allergic contact dermatitis because once you're allergic to a given allergen, that's something that in 2024 we can't cure, that's potentially a life-long allergy. If you become

allergic to something that's a common excipient in personal care products like shampoo, for instance, as well as in facial products, then you can have a lot of difficulty finding products you can use long-term. That would be the main issue.

However, when we're talking about things like irritant contact dermatitis, that's reasonably easy to fix with gentle skin care and appropriate topical anti-inflammatories. Conditions like periorificial dermatitis and perioral dermatitis can take months to settle down, are actually quite disfiguring, and cause a lot of quality-of-life impairment of the patients who are suffering from them, and that's not something we can necessarily settle down in a couple of weeks. It may take many months and, in worst cases, even up to a year to settle down.

Mei: There is a worry that some of the preservatives are actually endocrine disruptors and there's always concern that some of these items are not good for you long term. We don't really know, and less is more, as Katherine says. With the allergic contact dermatitis, the more you pile on, the more likely you will get sensitised to the agent, and you cannot just de sensitise to these agents. Things like hair dye, allergy, if you put it on as a henna tattoo in Bali, you get it painted on, you are sensitised within minutes, and you end up with the tattoo becoming inflamed and you can't hair dye ever long-term.

We find that once you sensitise and you have to go totally fragrance-free, there's only a handful of things that you can use. If you couple that with poly sensitisation, which is a condition where you end up with three or more allergic contact dermatitis, three different classes of allergens, then you end up with a real problem. Francis Lai one of the dermatologists has devised an app called CosMe, and he has made my life much easier because having these multiple allergens trying to find the one item that is free of all these items is a difficult process. Once you punch it into the app, you can have a personalised treatment regime worked out for you and products that can be recommended for you.

Kim: Are there other places online and obviously through medical experts as well where parents can get information about the products that they really should be steering clear from, or is there more of a general rule which I'm sensing is obviously fragrance and a few other ingredients that we should be looking out for?

Mei: The main ingredients that parents should be aware of fragrances and essential oils and also preservatives. There are a number of long names that we should know including methylisothiazolinone, also known as MI, and Methylchloroisothiazolinone, which is known as MCI. It was such a famous combination of allergens that it had its own Facebook page. In 2013, it was named the Contact Allergen of the Year by the American Society, and it gained notoriety. It was found in baby wipes, so young children from the age of zero to three were exposed, and the parents who were exposed to it ended up with hand dermatitis. Preservatives is important, fragrances are important. The companies who put the ingredients lists together, they can always hide the fragrances in the list by just calling them fragrances and perfumes.

When you actually look at the fragrance list or the ingredients list, you might not know that this is fragrance that you are being exposed to. There are some websites that will list out the types of chemicals that are listed there. We have the CosMe app. There's also Incidecoder, I-N-C-I-D-E-C-O-D-E-R that specifies what these chemicals do.

Kim: In terms of the skincare regimes that these tweens are following, what would be a couple of examples of the types of creams, serums, potions, lotions, that they are using on a regular basis?

Mei: They would apply a cream cleanser first, then they would apply a foaming cleanser to wash off the cream cleanser, and that's just the start. After that, they would apply their serums with the actives inside. Then, they will put on antioxidants, including a niacinamide. They will then add on their vitamins C and E, and the anti-aging things, which are in a retinol base, which is vitamin A. Subsequently, they put on the moisturisers.

Then finally, they put on the fixing mist. After that, sunscreen and only after that, all of that, they will put on their makeup. After all of those items, they put on their foundation, then they put on the colours, then they put on the glitter, then they put on the facial fixing mist again, and then they're ready to go.

Kim: Siu-Ying it's not just the physical effects of these products that concern parents, what do you see as the emotional impact and what can parents do to minimise this obsession on looks and body image?

Dr Siu-Ying Kwok: I'm listening to this, and I'm astonished at the number of steps that young people are taking in their skincare, which is, I must admit, I feel a little bit embarrassed, it's much more elaborate than mine. I'm just thinking these young people need to be out and about. It sounds to me, Mei, that they must be spending wash up to an hour, twice a day, just looking at themselves. In that 60 minutes, one begins to wonder, that 60 minutes of unnecessary time, self-critiquing, looking at themselves, and looking at imperfections. I hate to think what 8-year-olds, 9-year-olds, 10-year-olds, must be thinking.

Obviously, the impacts then on their self-identity. We know that this is the age group when their sense of self is beginning to form. Interest, hobbies, values, are all beginning to be explored, experimented with. I guess, ultimately, the concern then is about how not only how they would view themselves, how they compare themselves, and ultimately begin the sequence of dissatisfaction. The fear of missing out, I think, it's been something I've been hearing. Hence, why there's more and more and more layers in these steps.

Ultimately, the increased risk of that anxiety, depression, and in my area, psychiatry, eating disorders. Hearing earlier Katherine speak about that dopamine hit, if these regimes give them this sense of reward that is unfortunately short-lived, this obsessionality and this increased need to do more or to spend more time on this, takes away their childhood in terms of being out there, spending time with their friends rather than ultimately enjoying what any 8 to 14-year-old should be doing.

Associate Professor Alvin Chong: *Ever wondered what the Skin Health Institute does? At the Skin Health Institute based in Melbourne, we aim to improve skin health for all our patients, and the research we conduct shapes clinical treatment and practice. We provide over 30,000 patient treatments each year, and also deliver exceptional education programs for dermatologists, registrars, and healthcare workers. We provide specialist training for visiting international medical graduates, workshops to upskill GPs and medical students, and public education programs aimed at improving skin health in the community. The Institute also conducts clinical trials and research projects that are published and presented internationally. We make substantial contributions to the worldwide clinical care and management of skin diseases, skin cancer, and melanoma, and are recognized globally for our medical research. We have multiple clinics for GPs to directly refer patients to. GPs can complete our online referral form available on our website at skinhealthinstitute.org.au/patientreferrals, or email referrals to referrals@skinhealthinstitute.org.au.*

Kim: Do you think that this trend, this obsession, is starting at such a young age that it's setting them up even younger than we would have been aware, potentially as teenagers, of eating issues and body image issues, they're starting so much younger, so is that causing even more potential problems down the track?

Siu-Ying: Absolutely, agree, Kim, that we are now seeing, and I think, how much it's hard to say in the research due to COVID as we all appreciate in what's happened with the pandemic, but what we can say coming out of the pandemic. You would have seen in the news, we would have heard in the medical arena that there was an increased incidence of people with mental health issues. What we saw in eating disorders, and in a lot of my paediatrician colleagues as well as psychiatrist colleagues, we were starting to see this kind of trend of younger people coming into hospital with mental health issues, particularly eating disorders.

I think we need to begin to understand, and try and understand, that we are seeing younger people with very serious mental health issues and think about, perhaps, what are some of the factors that might have been contributing to that. Yes, we are starting to see a trend where young people who are becoming more unwell younger. We are aware that obviously, early adolescence is just the beginning of developing a sense of self and identity, and this is the perfect age group where these influencers can have quite a really detrimental impact on self-identity because obviously, the foundations are starting to be made at this point.

Young people are experimenting. They are trying to find themselves as they enter adulthood, this is the perfect time to obviously either develop a healthy sense of self or the risk of derailing to mental health problems and the beginnings of the onset of serious mental health problems into adulthood.

Kim: How do parents combat that? Because you see your children, I'm a mother of a teenage girl, 13-year-old, so I'm right smack in the middle of it at the moment, and your intellect tells you that you shouldn't be letting them get swept up in this obsession and this trend, but the reality is that all their friends are doing it, and there is that pester power and that peer group pressure, so you

find yourself succumbing to buying some of these products. What is your advice to parents in that situation?

Siu-Ying: I absolutely agree, Kim, how hard it must be to be a parent in this current day and age. I wonder, sometimes, our own fears and insecurities are projected into our young people. Just like they are succumbing to peer pressure, I can hear that we are succumbing to peer pressure. "The parents that are buying for their young people, well, why aren't I?" is what I'm hearing. I completely appreciate that we're now living in a situation where, in your heart of hearts, it's probably not all right. In a busy time, poor, chaotic lifestyle, juggling work, kids, family, careers, your own self-care, that it would be incredibly challenging to try and balance that pestering power.

However, I think the advice I would give is about informing yourself when making those decisions. As Mei and Katherine have been talking about, it's so hard to invest the time to explore the products that are harmful, and the products and the ingredients that may not be and then, I guess, impart that education onto our kids with the information, so that they can learn that actually, some of these ingredients are not right for their age, not appropriate for their skin right now, although, it might be when they're in their 40s. Yes, put on that retinol and Vitamin C, but right now, as both Mei and Katherine have said, less is more, and maybe it is to spend the time to turn over the products at the shops and go, "Oh my goodness, there's a hundred products in this. Let's go find another product, a skincare that has maybe less."

Kim: What tips do you have for parents from a really basic, practical point of view in starting those dialogues with their children?

Siu-Ying: It depends on the age of that child, obviously, a 14-year-old is very different to an 8-year-old, but allocating a dedicated time where there is an opportunity not to be distracted or disturbed, and setting quite a clear agenda, you're going to have that conversation about what you would like to talk about. Whether that be you're noticing that there's this obsessionality about makeup or skincare, or if you are particularly concerned about any other issue that might have arisen that you've noticed, and have that chat, because I do often think that young people generally appreciate that it's been acknowledged, or it's recognised.

I think young people do realise that their parents are busy, they might not have the time. They seek solace through social media and their friends. The fact that amongst the busyness, acknowledging that you've noticed there is a problem, dedicating a specific time that is disturbance-free, might actually be something that is hard to do, but very important to consider.

Kim: Katherine, what then is healthy for young people to use on their skin? If they're going to be adamant that they want to have a regime, what would you recommend?

Katherine: I think the only three things that a tween or a young teenager with normal skin that we could really justify them using would be a gentle non-foaming cleanser, a moisturiser if they would like to use one, but that is not always necessary if they have normal skin and a sunscreen. The sunscreen is the absolute non-negotiable, they should all be using sunscreen 365 days a year, as far as I'm concerned.

Really in the morning, a quick splash of the face with water is absolutely adequate in a healthy young person with normal skin prior to applying a sunscreen. If they want to use a cleanser, it's actually nighttime that it's important to use that to perhaps remove the debris and gunk of the day. Obviously, if they've had sunscreen on, they're going to have pollution, and if they've been playing sport they might have mud and certainly sweat trapped on the skin, so I think there's a good argument, and you can perhaps make that their little time for a routine.

Nighttime use a gentle, non-fragrance, non-foaming cleanser. If they would like to, they can use a moisturiser and then a sunscreen in the morning. That will alter slightly in the tween who might have early acne, but that's an entirely different situation and that is not the majority of the young people we are talking about today. There is obviously a role for active cosmeceutical skincare, but more importantly prescription skincare in the young person with active acne, but I think we're really talking about the young person who already has that idyllic perfect skin that all of us here spend most of our time trying to recapture.

I think maybe a talk about that is you're actually at the time of your life where you and your skin, it's perfect, so protect it. You can always say as a parent, do you know what, if you develop problems with spots and pimples, that's another conversation, but there's no point treating to prevent them when you don't have them.

Kim: We're talking about Mecca and Sephora, and they are the upper level of the skincare brands. They're very expensive. We see a lot of knockoffs in Kmart and other cheaper retailers. Is there any difference in those products as opposed to the so-called more expensive higher-end products in terms of the ingredients that they use and the harshness of those ingredients?

Mei: Actually, looking at all the ingredients, there's actually not much difference. I think it's about packaging, how it smells a little bit, and the sensorial experience of opening a beautiful bottle every morning adds to the cost and the advertising that goes along with it. Actually, the products in Aldi, in Coles, and Woolworths, the actual ingredients are not much different. The chemicals are all the same.

Perhaps there is a slight difference with the type of retinal that's put in. There's different grades. Actually, looking at it from an allergic contact dermatitis point of view, they're very, very similar. Preservatives are the same.

Katherine: I completely agree with Mei. I think where you start to see a difference between, I guess, your lower end mass market products, I mean lower end in terms of cost, not necessarily efficacy, and the more luxury products is mostly about the sensorial aspects, what's the texture like, what's the slip like on the skin, the complexity of fragrance and the packaging.

However, we knew yes, get to ingredients like our retinoids, so retinal, retinyl esters, retinaldehyde, and vitamin C actually in particular, that's when sometimes the more efficacious and safer, less likely to cause side effects, aspects do come into play. With vitamin C, there are a huge number of different compounds and esters, and some of them are far more likely to cause irritancy or perioral dermatitis than others.

Kim: You mentioned tanning. I see that as becoming an emerging issue around that age group now as well, whether it be the natural tanning through sunshine but also through the use of fake tans. What is your view on the use of fake tans for young skin?

Katherine: I do say to my patients the only kind of tan should come out of a bottle but acknowledging that self-tanners can actually be problematic. Quite a lot of them are comedogenic, so you will find that that can lead to development of blackheads and whiteheads and breakouts. Some of them now they're increasingly becoming these spritzes and sprays, which then are quite drying on the skin as well.

I think that they should be avoided because, again, they're just another step that's going to expose this very vulnerable skin to further preservatives fragrances, because by the way, all self-tanners are fragranced in some way to mask the smell of DHA or dihydroxyacetone which is the ingredient that leads to the tanning appearance.

I'm guilty of using self-tanners myself but I've got old mature haggard skin and can get away with it but I don't think this age group should be using them, or if they must, perhaps you can negotiate with them, "Look, this is a really special occasion thing. You're going to a really important party and if you must," but I don't see why they can't just wear makeup in that instance. I would be avoiding them. Obviously, any kind of natural tanning is a huge no-no.

Kim: We have touched on this a little bit, but it's not all doom and gloom. There must be some benefit in tweens thinking more about their skin.

Mei: I think it's good that they are self-aware, and they have a great appreciation of good skin, but dyeing your hair before you turn grey is not going to prevent you from greying. I think trying to apply anti-aging creams, et cetera, at an early age to prevent you from aging is not going to happen. The most important thing is sunscreen.

Kim: Now, obviously, this is big business, huge amounts of money are being spent on beauty products every year, and they're targeting younger and younger customers every time. I understand Baby Dior has now come out with its latest and greatest product. What can you tell us about that, Mei?

Mei: Dior is now putting together a package, so when the baby's born, you give them a \$210 package with baby perfume, baby wash, baby lotion. These babies come out already smelling beautifully of baby, and they don't need additional perfumes to add to the problem. When you actually have young skin which is sensitive with not a great barrier to start off with at first, and you're applying all these allergens and chemicals, you are risking them getting sensitised and creating problems. They don't need this at birth.

Kim: Laxmi, you're a medical professional struggling with managing your daughter's desire for the latest products. How do you see it playing out with your girls and their friends?

Laxmi: Firstly, I think about how these products entered our home in the first place. It's generally birthday parties where no party is complete without a Mecca or Sephora offering, and it's usually always a number one thing on Santa's wish list as well, and then grandma gives them \$100 and then off they go with their friends to go get Charlotte Tilbury or something fancy like that they shouldn't be using.

My girls do have products at home, unfortunately, with things like hyaluronic acid, niacinamide, caffeine, probably things that they shouldn't be using at this age, as Mei and Katherine, you both have very nicely highlighted, but they love using these terms with their friends because they're buzzwords.

Siu-Ying, you highlighted that fitting in is so important at this age, so it's crucial. These are an important part of their identity. It's almost like if they don't use these, they have FOMO and you talked about the fear of missing out, and that's so true. I think even though they know that it's perhaps not appropriate for their age, and I certainly know it, if they don't have these products, they just can't fit in anymore.

One thing that's important to note, I think teenage concerns are very important, and they're real. A pimple could just be a little pustule on a face, and for us, it's a normal process, natural process of aging. It happens but I don't think we should devalue that because that's huge. For a teenager, if you've got a blemish on your skin, we've got the wisdom now I think, "Oh, it's nothing," but when you are a teenager, it's everything.

I think Mecca and Sephora do a lot better in that they speak the same language as teenagers. We talked about the lighting, the nice smells, but also the language that they use, they care about sustainability, things that young teenagers care about now.

They make it very explicitly clear that gender and sexuality are not binary. All of those things really appeal to teenagers, and then when a teenager goes in and says, "Oh, I'm worried about this spot on my face," Mecca and Sephora take it very seriously, perhaps more seriously than we do as clinicians.

There's some other things that do concern me though, just from a philosophical perspective. As a society, are we encouraging a very toxic culture where we devalue natural processes of life, such as aging? I think that's crucial because forget about teenagers, look at myself. You open my cupboard at home. I've got niacinamide, I've got vitamin C serum, I've got all of those things.

I think there's much deeper things that we need to think about. To me, I guess they're very important concerns because, Siu-Ying, you touched on this, it's such an important time. The teenage brain, it's so malleable, and we're really setting the foundations here. How do we do this? It's very, very hard. I would love to be that parent who takes time off and sits at home and raises the kids really well, having these philosophical discussions, but I can't.

I work over a 50-hour week. When I come home, I have all of those normal things to do that mums do, and I've got other things to do outside of work hours. It's very hard to do all of those things. I

think as women, we take on all of those different roles and I don't think there's any easy solution to this question.

I think as a teenager as well, they must think, "Why should adults have it all?" All of these products are so beautifully marketed with the nice smells, the nice fragrances that you talked about, Katherine, they smell like bubble bath. "Why should it just be for adults? Why can't teenagers access it?" That's how they think. I don't want them to access those things. I think there are so many different levels and so many, things to take into consideration.

Siu-Ying: Striking that balance between parenting and then managing the young people's self-expression and experimenting with exploring their self-identity, I think parents nowadays have that extra layer of complexity on how to then set the limits, set the boundaries, and then having to conform. That's such a tricky balance, as you say, Katherine, at the moment because you still want them to explore, develop a sense of self. I guess the argument could be if they're so influenced by social media, they don't have a chance to be imaginative, creative, and explore naturally, they're actually being influenced.

It really highlights about growing up too quickly as well, doesn't it? That perhaps there's more information through social media and exposure on that really regular basis compared to the generation with less of that social influence.

It's almost like Gen Alpha has been forced to mature earlier as a result. What I'm hearing from you, Mei, is that if we can delay some of that exposure at an earlier time, these sensitivities and allergens may be less likely. They may still develop, but they are less likely. The earlier the exposure, the more potential harm there is. Perhaps the earlier the exposure at a younger age of some of these influences, the more potential psychological damage.

It's about using the right things and being exposed to the right things at the more right time appropriate for the developmental stage. Maybe that's another tip-- that things to consider as a parent, what is appropriate for the right time and age.

Kim: That's why these sorts of conversations are so important, aren't they? Because we all feel those conflicted emotions around what's going on with our young women in particular. Skincare and their self-perception and the practicalities of life don't allow the perfect case scenario in any of these situations. I guess what I hope that people will take away from this today is little snippets of practical information that will help inform how they will manage the young people in their lives, whether it be looking at the ingredients, whether it be taking some time to have a conversation in the right environment.

Laxmi: That concludes our episode on Skincare Gone Crazy. We would like to thank the education team at the Skin Health Institute and Balloon Tree Productions. Remember, these podcasts are not meant to replace medical advice. If you have a skin condition that requires attention, we strongly encourage you to see your medical practitioner. For listeners who want more information on this subject, a transcript of this episode and links to other resources can be found on our website, spotdiagnosis.org.au. That's spotdiagnosis.org.au.

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