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**IMPORTANCE OF THE DERMATOLOGICAL EXAM**

Diplomate, American Board of Dermatology

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## **THE IMPORTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE COMPLETE DERMATOLOGICAL EXAM**

Dear New Patient,

The complete dermatological exam involves close inspection (or, simply put, "looking") at all of your skin to see if there are particular problem areas. It is not a complete medical or physical exam. It only involves a skin doctor with a well-trained eye looking for any potential problems or abnormalities of the skin, hair and nails.

If a patient comes to see his dermatologist with a hand problem, he might wonder why he should first be in a gown to have all his skin examined. The answer is simple. Many people cannot see all of their skin, and even if they see it, they do not recognize growths or areas of skin that could be pre-malignant. Moreover, no one has the extra years of special training to evaluate your skin as your dermatologist has. Thus, even if you have had a recent medical exam, some skin lesions and their significance could have been missed.

As a concerned dermatologist, I feel it is part of my job to be sure my patients do not have any hidden skin problems. Many malignancies of the skin have been found on people's backs and legs of which the patient was completely unaware. Moreover, there are sometimes clues in covered areas of skin that can help make the diagnosis of the area of concern to the patient (for example, a small spot on the forearm might look like a fungus infection of the skin, but when several other lesions or spots can be seen on the sides or back, it may mean that it is really a viral infection, which requires completely different treatment).

The American Academy of Dermatology supports the concept and idea of the complete dermatological examination. It is slightly more time consuming for the dermatologist, but it is a big factor in giving the patient the highest degree of patient care. There is no extra charge for this service in this office.

If new patients truly refuse such an examination, the doctor will see them, after they sign a release form noting that the doctor is not responsible for any growths on areas of skin he has not been able to examine.

My chief aim is to give my patients the best of skin care.

Lewis H. Kaminester, M.D.