

VENICE PLASTIC SURGERY

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Cosmetic, Reconstructive, Face, Breast, and Hand Surgery

Wounds - Growth factors, generic drugs

Growth factors have been in the news. They are substances that are in the bloodstream known to help or promote growth and healing. Some have been discovered years ago while others have only recently been isolated. There are certainly even more of these chemicals that we have not yet found.

This is a promising group of chemicals used to treat wounds. Some show great healing potential in the laboratory. The problem is that when used on animals or on people the effects seem less exciting. I believe the study of these chemical substances is in their infancy.

Maybe the effectiveness of these drugs will be improved if we can mix several together. In your body there are a number of different chemicals or hormones working together at the same time. The problem with medications is that each chemical is made by a different drug company. It is unlikely they would get together on a common product by mixing their chemicals together. If we could mix some drugs together maybe we would have something that truly speeds the healing process significantly.

Another problem is the expense. These products that are supposed to promote healing are often too costly for many of our patients. Maybe in time competing drug companies will drive the price down. Generic products will be available.

I want to mention my feeling about generic drugs. Most medications are the combination of an active drug and other chemicals that are generally inert. These inert chemicals seem unimportant but may play a major role in how your body utilizes the drug. For example a Brand Name antibiotic may be coated with a tasteful substance so as not to be bitter when swallowed. The drug may be mixed with an antacid so it does not upset your stomach and there may be some additive to speed its absorption into your bloodstream to make it work faster. The "equivalent" generic could be packaged as the active chemical alone. It would be cheaper but distasteful, stomach upsetting and slower to do its intended effect.

Generic prescriptions may therefore be different than the brand name item. Never-the-less I still tell my patients to get the generic most of the time. They are just as good or good enough in many situations. There are exceptions and I tell my patients and write prescriptions to dispense only the brand name item when I believe it is important. Always ask your doctor what their feelings are about the medications they prescribe. Is the generic really OK for your particular needs? Lastly, and for the sake of complete objectivity, the generic could actually be better for you than the original medication. Always ask your doctor.

**The above represents the opinion of A. E. Haas, M.D.
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Just call us directly. No referral needed unless required by your insurance company

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