

Skin Care Basics

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You cannot build a house without a solid foundation. You cannot prepare a bold soldier without basic training. And you cannot, or at least you should not, embark on a sophisticated skin rejuvenation program without getting the basics right. In fact, neglecting the basics is almost guaranteed to make the rest of your skin care program far less effective.

Your skin reflects your health. It's your body's canvas and one of its most valuable assets. For taking care of your skin, start developing healthy habits that guard your valued possession from outer and inner forces that can have adverse effects on to your skin.

Below there are few tips how to follow and maintain skin care basics.

n Clean and moisturise your skin daily Wash your face twice daily once in the morning and once at night before going to bed. After cleansing your skin, apply a toner and moisturiser. Toners help to remove traces of oil, dirt and make-up that you may have missed when cleansing. Moisturising is necessary even for people with oily skin. Buy a moisturiser that is best suited for your skin type (dry, normal or oily).

n Block the sun Over time, exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from sun causes many problems in skin, like wrinkles, discoloration, freckles or age spots, benign (non-cancerous) growths such as moles, and pre-cancerous or cancerous growths such as basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. In fact, most skin cancers are related to sun exposure. Always wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater.

n Seek professional help for skin problems Skin is not going to be perfect. It can be dry or oily; it can develop rashes and acne, among many other issues. Address the problem with a professional skin expert, either a skin aesthetician at your local salon or a dermatologist for more severe skin problems.

n Eat a balanced diet Eat a healthy and balanced diet and avoid fried and greasy foods.

n Self screening Over the course of your life, you should pay attention to all parts of your skin.

Familiarise yourself with it, so you'll notice any changes that might occur, such as different moles or patches that might indicate skin cancer. Whenever you have a question or concern, make sure you see your doctor.

n Chlorine and hot water Hot showers and baths make one's body feel relaxed and refreshed but your skin may disagree. Chlorine in tap water is an oxidative agent (that's how it kills bacteria) and may cause some skin damage. The hotter the water, the greater the damage because the rate of chemical reactions increases with temperature. Limit baths and showers to once a day or less and don't soak for too long. Make it warm, not hot.

n Harsh detergents Harsh detergents, particularly the so-called ionic detergents, may be harmful for your skin. They are called ionic because their molecules become charged when dissolved in water. The most common and ubiquitous ionic detergents are sodium lauryl sulfate, sodium laureth sulfate (both acronymed SLS) and their analogs, such as ammonium lauryl sulfate, ammonium laureth sulfate and others. In fact, SLS is often used to produce experimental skin damage in clinical studies of skin protectors. These powerful detergents, SLS and analogs are widely used in households and body care products, such as shampoos, soaps, dishwashing liquids, laundry detergents, and so forth.

Read the ingredient list on all products that come in contact with your skin. If they contain ionic detergents, eliminate or minimise their use by replacing them with similar products that are non-ionic or use alternate cleansing methods, wear gloves when washing dishes, etc. For example, if your shampoo or soap has SLS or its analogs, you can switch to non-irritating baby shampoo and glycerin-based moisturising soaps.

n Puffiness Puffiness in the eye area is a common manifestation of mild facial edema. Edema is a term for the excess fluid accumulation in soft tissue manifested by swelling. Edema stretches the skin and eventually leads to wrinkles and sagging. The eye area is particularly prone to edema due to the dense capillary network and lack of fat padding. It is important to know that significant edema (especially if not confined to face) might be a sign of a health problem, such as an allergy, kidney insufficiency or liver disease. It has to be investigated by a physician to rule out medical conditions.

A more common situation, however, is morning puffiness (mild facial edema that occasionally occurs in the morning and goes away during the day) caused by lifestyle factors (such as lack of sleep, alcohol consumption and others). It is important to minimise morning puffiness not

because it is a transient nuisance on awakening but it is one of the biggest contributors to the aging of the eye area.

n Facial expressions Certain facial expressions, if repeated often enough, cause the so-called motion wrinkles. In particular, squinting creates motion wrinkles known as crow's feet while frowning causes forehead wrinkles known as frown lines.

Many people squint or frown without knowing it. Ask people who see you every day whether you tend to squint or frown.

The first step towards reducing squinting and frowning is being aware of it.

The next step is to develop a habit / reflex to relax your face, especially when you feel that you are beginning to squint or frown. Also, squinting is common among people who are nearsighted and do not wear glasses or have insufficiently strong ones. If you don't see clearly in the distance when your eyes are relaxed, chances of squinting still exist. Adjust your eyewear to ensure clear vision.

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