

Great Skin Care:
**IT TAKES MINUTES
AND LASTS A LIFETIME!**



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Skin Structure

Learning how the skin is structured has helped researchers and scientists to develop skin care products that work with the body and not against it. A basic understanding of skin structure will help to lay a foundation for the concepts that are proposed here and will also help you to take the best care possible of the skin you're in!

The skin forms the largest organ of the body. It accounts for 16% of a person's weight.

The skin performs a complex role in physiology. From preventing infections from entering the body, to internal temperature control, and providing a controlled environment inside the body, the skin is often underestimated.

Skin, and the fat layer beneath it, acts as a good insulator to protect the organs. Physical toughness helps provide a barrier to harmful chemicals, invading organisms, and a cushion against stress and force. It stretches to accommodate our movements, is the largest producer of Vitamin D for our bodies, constantly feeds information to our brain about the external environment and is inextricably attached to the presentation of our self to others.

Under the layer of skin that can be seen and felt are three layers of fat. Above those are the two main layers of the skin - the epidermis and the dermis.

The epidermis is the outermost layer that we see. It is about 0.1 mm thick except over the soles of the feet and palms of the hands where it can reach a thickness of 1 mm or more. That is 10 times the thickness over the rest of the body.

The main cells that make up the epidermis are called keratinocytes. They produce a tough protein called keratin. This gives the skin much of its resistance to physical wear and tear and makes the skin waterproof.

As tough as these cells are they don't remain with us for our lifetime. New keratinocytes are produced at the deepest level of the epidermis and migrate to the surface, eventually wearing off each 60 days.

This process of regeneration of skin cells plays a role in the type of cleansing, toning, moisturizing, acne prevention and anti-aging processes we use to keep our skin looking its best.

As the keratinocytes reach the surface layer of the skin they have flattened and overlap each other. This adds to their protective function.

The dermis lies under the epidermis and is about 4 times thicker. This is where blood vessels, hair roots, sweat glands and supporting tissue such as collagen and elastin are found.

Within the dermis are sweat glands that deliver secretions directly to the skin surface. The hair follicles that are deep in the dermis have two oily sebaceous glands on either side as they exit the epidermis.

Deep under the dermis is the hypodermis or subcutaneous tissue. These tissues aren't technically a part of the skin tissue but rather play a supporting role. The hypodermis is comprised of loose connective tissue and has a lot of fat to help control metabolism and insulate the body from external temperature changes.

The structures that have the most impact on skin care are the keratinocytes, collagen and elastin. These are the three proteins that make up the skin and the supporting structures to help keep faces from sagging and allow a glowing complexion to shine through.

In biochemical terms collagen is a triple helix formed by three protein chains that wrap around one another. These molecules are cross-linked in the extracellular spaces to form fibrils that have the tensile strength of steel. Basically these molecules are strong and provide much of the structure for our skin.

Collagen is also what forms scar tissue. So if the skin is cut, a white scar results which was formed by collagen.

Collagen is the most abundant protein in the skin and is often referred to as the fountain of youth. It is responsible for keeping fine lines and wrinkles at bay but as the environment and age takes their toll the body has a diminished capacity to produce collagen.

In the same biochemical vein, elastin chains form a rubber like elastic fiber that recoil spontaneously as soon as a stretching force is relaxed. And, as with collagen, age diminishes the levels of protein causing the skin to wrinkle and sag.

Working together to provide elasticity and strength to the skin, both collagen and elastin have much to do about great skin care.

The last substance in the structure of the skin is hyaluronic acid. This substance forms a part of the tissue that surrounds the collagen and elastin fibers. It has the ability to attract and hold 100 times its weight in water. This is a natural moisturizing ingredient that helps the skin plump and appear youthful.

As aging marches on the amount of hyaluronic acid that is produced decreases. This is one reason why aging skin is less resilient and pliable.

An understanding of the basic structure of the skin gives the foundation to choosing the right products for our skin type. Which type are you?

What's My Skin Type?

We've all heard that the make up and moisturizer we chose should be based on the type of skin we have. The acne treatment we use, the make up foundation and the application of make up is all based on type of skin and whether it is consistent all over the face.

There are several different types of skin that range from oily to dry to combination skin. Determining which skin type you have will help you purchase skin cleansers that work best, make up that stays on all day and moisturizer that won't cause breakouts.

To get a good handle on your skin type answer these questions.

- Is your skin oily throughout the day? Yes (3) Sometimes (2) No (1)
- During the day does your face feel tight? Yes (1), Sometimes (2), No (3)
- Is your skin shiny during the day? Yes (3), Sometimes (2), No (1)

If your score is 7-10 your skin is oily; 4-6 and it is combination skin and below it is dry.

Now that you know what your overall skin type is you'll be able to choose the skin cleanser that works best for you without causing further tightness or shininess to your face during the day. Using the correct cleanser can also decrease any breakouts that you may be prone to experiencing.

Choosing your make up is also important. Many of the make up products today are classified for all skin types, dry skin or oily skin. Those products, which are used for people with oily skin don't add additional moisture, while those designed for people with dry skin will add additional moisture to the face.

Many women find that if they have oily skin a make up foundation that is powder based, such as a mineral make up, adds little moisture, gives great coverage and doesn't add to any breakout problems. Women also find that mineral make up feels lighter, doesn't settle into the creases in their face and also doesn't leave that tell tale make up line under their chin.

If you have dry skin you may find that a tinted moisturizer works well for your foundation. This adds moisture while still giving coverage. When choosing your foundation look for one that includes a sunscreen or that you use a sun screen before applying a foundation.

For the most part, the majority of women have combination skin, have minimal breakouts, minimal shine or dryness. These generalizations may vary during different season such as in the summer the skin may be oilier and in winter a bit dryer.

When choosing moisturizer purchase one which is a lightweight product and is oil free. Your daily cleansers should be gently exfoliating that will take away the impurities without drying out the skin. If your face feels dry and tight after washing then the cleanser may be too drying. If you feel oily or greasy then it may have too much moisture for your skin type.

Understanding how skin type impacts the products and the skin aging process will help to improve your chances of never really looking your age. With advanced skin care technology, knowledge, prevention and treatment options women today have the ability to look far younger than their calendar years. And benefiting from these advantages doesn't have to be expensive, time consuming or difficult.

Next let's address the benefits your skin gains from giving it the right vitamins, minerals and hydration. Your skin care really begins from the inside out.

Skin Care Begins From The Inside Out

Your skin is actually a fingerprint of what is happening inside your body. When we suffer from psoriasis, acne and the aging process, it is a manifestation of what the body requires internally – include nutrition. So while we might focus on care of our skin for a better presentation to the public we are also providing our bodies with the nutrition it needs to thrive.

Now, while it would be naïve to believe that just changing our nutrition can wipe out wrinkles or completely stop the aging process, it is also naïve to think that we aren't what we eat.

Our bodies use the nutrition and hydration we provide to build cells, fight infections, and build tissue. If what we provide are processed foods, trans fatty acids, and high amounts of animal fat then we can't be surprised by the results – even if our skin cream is \$50.00 for each 0.5 ounce tube.

What we eat affects every organ in our bodies. Our skin is the largest organ in our body so it stands to reason that the skin will be affected by our eating habits.

A good skin cream will help to provide the vitamins that skin needs directly to the epidermis but the dermis depends upon the nutrients we eat to develop well.

Every cell in the body depends upon a complex cocktail of dozens of nutrients and metabolites such as vitamins, minerals, living enzymes and essential amino acids. By providing these nutrients you actually are able to slow the aging process of the body overall, and therefore the skin.

There are limitations to providing adequate nutrition to slowing the aging process and we'll discuss those factors in the next section under Negative Effects to Skin Care.

Another limitation to good nutrition is that you won't notice a striking change immediately. It will take weeks, if not months, for a change in your diet to make a change to your body. But neglecting this aspect of caring for your skin will definitely produce negative effects as time marches on.

Mild deficiencies in vitamins and minerals, which may not make a clinical difference in your health, will impede the ability of the skin to rejuvenate and repair itself – and thus move the aging process along even faster. Improving nutrition in people who have some subclinical nutrient deficits may result in younger looking skin and a partial

reversal of some signs of aging. This isn't the effect of a facelift but rather a change in texture and tone, which can reduce the appearance of fine lines.

So what are those essential vitamins for skin health?

Looking at the paragraphs above it's apparent that the skin requires most, if not all, of the nutrients that the rest of the body needs in order to function properly. But there are several vitamins that seem to be chronically deficient and with addition may result in significant changes.

Some of the new and exciting dermatological discoveries are the impact that vitamins have to counteract the effects of sun exposure. Does this mean that we should neglect using sunscreen? Absolutely not! But, when we occasionally forget the sunscreen, or if it wears off, it's good to know that vitamins can help to counteract our neglect.

From a topical standpoint, a research study published in the 2002 Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology, researchers from Duke University demonstrated that appreciable photo-protection (protection from sun damage) can be received from topical vitamins C and E.

This study was backed up by a more recent study in 2005 in the Journal of Investigative Dermatology. Researchers found that people who took Vitamin C and E internally long-term reduced their risk of sunburn from exposure to UVB radiation and they found reduced factors linked with DNA damage. This led them to conclude that antioxidant vitamins help protect against DNA damage.

This discovery has had effects that reach further than skin damage or the aging process. Many of today's chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer and cardiac disease can be linked back to damage done by free radicals. And free radicals are what cause DNA damage AND they are what anti-oxidants fight.

A further discussion of free radicals follows in the next section. Combining these two particular vitamins in skin lotion can be highly protective against sun damage.

This does NOT mean that you can slather on sunscreen, take your vitamins and then bake in the sun. But rather, this means that the UVA and UVB radiation, that breaks through the sunscreen, can potentially be negated by your daily vitamins and nutritional intake.

The best vitamins are found in their natural state. As much as researchers would like to reproduce the vitamins our bodies need into a pill it is impossible to provide all of the enzymes and minerals that work in the complex cocktail our bodies need to function appropriately.

Vitamin C is found in its natural state in citrus fruit and vegetables such as broccoli, bell peppers, cauliflower and leafy greens. Vitamin E is found in nuts, seeds, olives,

spinach and asparagus. In recent research scientists have found that large doses of Vitamin E can be harmful to your health. So while large doses are hard to achieve using whole foods, the addition of a supplement can increase your chances of causing more harm.

Vitamin A is necessary for the repair and maintenance of your skin. If you have enough from the foods you eat adding more in the form of a vitamin pill probably won't be harmful since it is a water soluble vitamin. But if you are just a bit deficient you will see effects such as dry flaky skin. Fruits and vegetables are loaded with Vitamin A.

Water soluble vitamins are those that are excreted in the urine when the body has had enough. Fat soluble vitamins, on the other hand, are stored in the fat deposits of the body.

Topical Vitamin A can make a real difference to your skin. Medical studies have shown a reduction in wrinkles, acne and aging. The topical form of Vitamin A is called Retinol.

Retinol is also very drying and although it protects against photo aging and damage it also can incite further damage if the skin is exposed to the sun when it is undergoing initial changes to the topical cream.

Researchers published a study in the British Journal of Dermatology, which found that foods high in beta-carotene also appear to reduce the risk of psoriasis.

Vitamin B complex is another of the vitamins that make a difference in the health of skin. The most important of these is biotin, which forms the basis of skin, hair and nail cells. Mild deficiencies can cause symptoms and in severe cases it leads to hair loss, and dermatitis.

Biotin is found in bananas, oatmeal, rice, eggs and your body also makes some on it's own.

More recently there has been attention given to topical creams and lotions that contain Vitamin B complex. They appear to give the skin an almost instant healthy glow while also hydrating cells and increasing overall tone.

Niacin is another of the Vitamin B complex vitamins that scientists have found to help the skin retain moisture. Creams and lotions that contain niacin can help the skin to look plumper and younger in as little as six days.

Niacin also has anti-inflammatory properties that soothe dry and irritated skin. It is found in some prescription medications in higher doses with the intent to lighten out blotchy skin or dark areas.

In a study presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Dermatology in 2003 researchers described how a topical form of Vitamin B dramatically improved the aging process in human skin.

Vitamin K is another vitamin that has been shown to have an affect on the health of skin. Researchers don't believe that there is a huge effect from the internal environment but rather topical application has been shown to reduce circles under the eyes as well as reduce bruising on the skin.

Doctors from the University of Miami School of Medicine found that skin treatments with Vitamin K cream after laser surgery significantly reduced bruising and when combined with vitamin A in a cream it is even more effective for the dark circles under the eyes.

Minerals are another important part of adequate nutrition to feed the skin, both internally and externally. Most of us don't need to take extra supplements, especially if we're taking a multi-vitamin or if we drink spring water. Spring water naturally contains a healthy dose of minerals. Some studies have also shown that washing your face with spring water will help to reduce many skin irritations and the mineral content may help some skin cells absorb moisture better.

These minerals include Selenium, Copper and Zinc. Selenium is especially interesting because it has been found to help decrease the damage done to skin cells that results from sun exposure. In a study in the Journal of the American Medical Association in 1996 the researchers found that patients who were diagnosed with skin cancer and who took 200 micrograms of selenium per day had 37% less malignancies, reduced their risk of death by 50% and had an overall reduced mortality by 17%.

The best dietary sources of selenium are eggs, garlic, seafood and whole grain cereals.

Just as anti-oxidants do amazing miracles to keep our bodies healthy and protect us against DNA changes they are also now included in topical creams and lotions, providing us with targeted work on the specific cells we want protected from aging damage.

Alpha-Lipoic Acid is a powerful antioxidant, 100 times more potent than Vitamin C or E. It may turn out to be a real boost for the anti-aging movement. It is able to penetrate both oil and water, which effectively allows it to affect skin cells from both inside and outside the body.

More specifically it helps neutralize the cell damage caused by free radicals, much the same that Vitamins C and E do – but with more power. Researchers also believe it helps the other vitamins to work more effectively in a complex combination of natural protection.

DMAE is another strong antioxidant that helps reduce the damage from free radicals. This substance may also help to prevent the formation of the basis for age spots. It's currently available in creams and supplements.

Hyaluronic Acid is a substance made by the body. The main job is to help lubricate joints so they move smoothly and easily without causing damage of bone against bone.

Research has found that it plays a role in acting like glue that keeps the cells together, looking smoother and younger. It is also able to hold up to 100 times its weight in moisture. This keeps the top cells moist and plump giving the last layer of skin a more youthful and radiant appearance.

This nutrient isn't readily available in foods. It is available in supplemental form but there isn't good evidence that taking it internally will prove effective.

The last nutrients essential to good skin health are the essential fatty acids or EFAs. Lack of these fatty acids leaves your skin dry, prone to inflammation and frequently dotted with white heads or black heads. These EFAs are crucial to the production of the skin's natural oil barrier. Without the EFAs the skin produces more sebum, or a more irritating form of oil, which results in skin imbalances.

The two key EFAs are omega-3 and omega-6. Most of us get an adequate amount of omega-6 in baked goods, cooking oils, poultry, grains and other foods. But we are usually lacking in a good source of omega-3. Good dietary sources include cold-water fish such as salmon, mackerel, sardines and flaxseed, flax and safflower oils.

Negative Effects To Skin Care

Women are usually most concerned with aging, skin creams, wrinkles and age spots. But men also have these concerns that cause them difficulties and have a negative impact on their self-esteem.

Each day our skin is assaulted by agents and factors that can cause aging. Your skin may begin to look dull and you may see wrinkles around your mouth and eyes. But you can fight against premature aging of your skin with just a little know how and action.

Young people don't often ask what damages the skin. Instead they worship the sun, forget to moisturize, eat junk foods and don't drink water. When, in fact, those are many of the pieces of the puzzle that damage the skin and cause wrinkles, fine lines and age spots.

The relationship between these factors to free radicals is the basis of the cause of the changes to the skin. These free radicals gobble up collagen and elastin, the fibers that support skin structure preventing wrinkles and other signs of aging. Free radicals are a harmful byproduct of sunlight, smoke and pollution to name the greatest culprits to damage to the collagen and elastin layers.

To start you should know there are two types of factors that are causes of skin aging. There are internal and external factors. Internal factors are ones that can't be stopped and are related to the decreases in hormone production, elastin, collagen and structure of the skin. External factors can be affected which will decrease your risk for premature aging of the skin.

One of the problems with preventing the causes of skin aging is that you may know what they are but you don't do anything about them. Education is great but actions speak louder than words. People often already know the causes of skin aging from news media and magazines but without action your skin will continue to age prematurely.

There are several different types of damage to the skin. The first happens from things that can't be changed – such as **aging**. There just isn't a way to stop the hands of time. And the hands of time affect your skin and your body. There is no getting around that. Aging decreases the amount of collagen and elastin in the skin that will decrease the amount of flesh under the skin. Between the lack of collagen and gravity you develop jowls, wrinkles, fine lines and crows feet.

But, if you do what you can to alleviate the damages that you can change, the hands of time won't be as unforgiving and you can retain much of your youthful appearance long past the years your parents did.

Begin with sun care. Use sunscreen no matter what your age. When ever you go into the sun or outside you can prevent the signs of aging before they even happen by using a sunscreen that has an SPF of 15 or higher. Get into the habit of using it early morning on your face and hands. Some foundations will also have this level of protection. Don't forget about the backs of your hands. Your face may be without wrinkles or sunspots but your hands may tell your age. Your hands are exposed to the sun each day when you are behind the wheel of your car or sitting near a window.

One of the first signs of **sun damage** is a suntan, which results from injury to the epidermis layer of the skin. The UV light accelerates the production of melanin. The extra melanin creates the tan, which is actually the body's way of protecting the skin from further damage by UV light. Eventually sun will cause a sunburn that kills and damages skin cells. If there is enough sun to cause a burn there will also be damage to the DNA of the skin cells.

For instance, researchers know that exposure to the sun increases the amount of collagen and elastin that are lost in your skin, speeding the aging process. Exposure to the sun damages the skin and increases your risk of skin cancer as well. The problem stems from the ultraviolet rays from the sun and tanning beds and fluorescent lighting. So, although you may be spending the majority of your time indoors in an office, if there is fluorescent lighting you still need sunscreen each morning under your make up and on your exposed skin.

The bottom line is that you should avoid the sun during the high-intensity hours and use sunscreen at all times. During appropriate weather cover your skin with clothing that provides the best protection against the sun. You don't have to hide away indoors, and in fact under fluorescent lighting, staying indoors isn't really protection. Be sharp about your sun exposure, wear protection and think smart.

Other things that damage the skin are a **lack of moisture** from poor fluid intake and poor external moisturizer. You should drink 8-10 8-ounce glasses of water each day. When your skin becomes dry it can show more wrinkles. You can use moisture from the outside and the inside. Start by staying hydrated each day. This helps your skin cells to stay plump and healthy, which gives your skin a healthy glow.

You don't need to spend a great deal of money on moisturizers; coconut oil and olive oil after a bath when your skin is still wet is a great addition to your daily routine.

Or you can treat yourself to a good facial moisturizer and massage it into your skin twice a day. This will create a barrier that stops the skin from losing essential moisture. Facial moisturizers will help slow the aging process, decrease the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles and slow the development of age spots. Establish a daily routine and you will soon notice a decrease in the appearance of fine lines.

Interestingly one of the external factors that are a cause of skin aging is **facial expression**. Repeated facial expressions can actually lead to fine lines and wrinkles. As your skin ages and loses elasticity it stops springing back to its line free state. So if you are frowning constantly – stop! The grooves become permanently etched in your face.

Another one of the causes of skin aging is the position you **sleep** in at night. When you rest your face on the pillow in the same way every night for years it leads to wrinkles. These wrinkles are called sleep lines and are etched into your face and don't disappear when you are awake and walking around. People who sleep on their back do not develop these wrinkles since their skin doesn't lie crumpled against the pillow.

Smoking is another factor that damages the skin. Smoking causes wrinkles from the squinting of your eyes due to the irritation of the smoke, pursing your lips to smoke the cigarette and a break down of collagen and elastin from the nicotine in the tobacco.

Researchers have found that tobacco increases the loss of collagen and elastin, which improve the structure of the skin. Loss of the collagen and elastin increase the development of wrinkles, jowls and deep lines.

And last, but certainly not least, of the factors that damage the skin, is **poor nutrition**. A full description of how nutrition affects our skin is found in the section above but it doesn't hurt to repeat that nutrients we feed our bodies are what they use to produce the skin cells we see in the mirror.

We really are what we eat. When we feed our cells junk food and saturated fat we really can't expect the body to convert those things to vitamins and minerals needed to run the body smoothly. Although a multi-vitamin is a good adjunct the body doesn't metabolize these as well as from a natural source. So eat your vegetables and fruit and drink your water!

Cleansing, Toning, Moisturizing

How to remove your make up at night

Removing your make up at night is a very important part of keeping your face clear without breakouts and acne. For women who are older than 20 it is also an important part of maintaining a youthful appearance. If you leave your mascara on all night it dries the lashes, which causes them to crack and break off. Base or foundation that is left on all night will dry out the skin and clog the pores.

Removing make up at night starts with being able to see your face! If you have long hair or hair that is long enough to pull back with a headband, clip or ponytail holder, then do it.

Begin by removing your eye make up with a cotton ball moistened with make up remover. You can also use Cetafil as an eye make up remover. It's gentle and easy on your skin. Put the make up remover over your eye make up and mascara and let it soften the mascara so it removes easily. With the waterproof mascara this might take a minute.

Waterproof mascara is actually very damaging to the lashes as you remove it. If at all possible use a mascara that isn't water proof unless you are going into a situation where you know that you'll be shedding tears, such as a wedding or funereal. At other times if you cry unexpectedly you may lose a bit of your mascara but you'll have healthy eyelashes in the long-term.

Next use a cleaner that is best for your skin type. If you are using the services of a dermatologist then ask their advice. You may also want to visit several skin counters at department stores to get their advice and then take the one that sounds most like your skin. Be sure the cleanser can be used for make up removal.

You might also consider using the Cetafil over your face to remove the make up. Or you can use a homemade facial cleanser that is gentle to your face. Never use bar soap to clean your face. Because of the pH differences you'll do more damage to your face with bar soap than by leaving the make up on overnight.

Use lukewarm water to lather up the cleanser and help the make up to breakdown on your face. You don't want to scrub hard but using the warm water and a dollop of the cleanser rub it into a lather and rub it gently over your face concentrating on the places where you apply make up.

Spend a minute, at least 60 seconds, to go over your face and be sure you've cleaned all areas. You will also want to clean your neck gently to help remove any powder, perfume and daily dirt that settles there.

Now rinse your face several times with lukewarm water to get rid of the cleanser and make up from your face. You may enjoy using a warm wet washcloth instead – but don't scrub. You may prefer to splash cold water on your face at the very last to tighten your pores. Now pat your face dry. Don't rub or scrub with the towel but gently pat the areas dry.

Next use a toner for your skin type. You'll be surprised at how much more dirt will be removed with the cotton swab and toner that you will have missed with the cleanser. Use a liberal amount of oil free astringent. It is one of the most important parts of your daily skin care. The toner will help to clear your pores, tighten your skin and help prepare it for any of the night creams or serums that you will be using. It also helps to balance the skin after cleanser and before moisturizers.

Do not forget to moisturize! Your skin needs the extra moisture each night after a day of wearing make up and then cleansing at night. Don't forget your lips. The skin over the lips is thinner than anywhere else on the face. Use a strong emollient-based product each night to keep your lips plump and kissable the next day.

Your choice of moisturizers should include ingredients such as hyaluronic acid to help maintain plump radiant skin cells and peptides. Peptides are the new buzz-word in the skin care industry. The addition of these substances have been shown to improve skin elasticity, improvement in roughness, clarity, fine lines and wrinkles.

Be sure to read the "Skin Care Begins From The Inside Out" to get a good list of nutrients that perform well with topical application.

Done Day And Night

But the cleansing routine shouldn't be done just in the evening. Cleaning make up and daily dirt from your face is definitely important but cleaning away the dead cells and pillow lint in the morning can be just as important before putting on new make up and facing the day.

Follow a similar routine of cleansing, toning and moisturizing. In the morning your moisturizer will be lighter and would be best with a sunscreen of SPF 15. Even though your foundation may have an SPF factor your moisturizer will also be placed over your neck where foundation isn't often applied.

So to break this down into steps:

1. Take off your make up, especially mascara, with a gentle make up remover.

2. Clean your face twice a day, morning and evening, to remove make up, daily dirt and pillow lint.
3. After cleansing use a balancing toner to continue removing the last of the toxins and waste products from your skin as well as prepare it for moisturizer.
4. Use a specific cream designed for the eyes.
5. Find a moisturizer that fits your skin type so you reap the benefits of skin that is well balanced, without clogged pores and retaining as much moisture as is possible.

Masks and Exfoliates

While most people know about cleaning, moisturizing and even sunscreen, exfoliation seems to be an overlooked regimen in skin care at home.

Exfoliation is the skin's natural process of removing dead skin cells to reveal the healthy, glowing fresh skin cells beneath. The exterior skin cells become dry, scaly and non-functional as they die.

As we age the process of exfoliation through begins to slow. By the time we reach the ripe old age of 25 that process has doubled in time. What once took 30 days now takes 60.

So the new skin cells that were revealed after 30 days when we were 20 now takes 60 days to come to the surface, making our faces duller, dryer and definitely looking our age.

But we have options to improve the natural process by using an exfoliation to help the skin shed the dead cells.

There are two types of exfoliation of the facial skin. One is chemical and the other is physical.

Chemical exfoliation products often contain a form of mild acid such as alpha hydroxy or salicylic acid. These work to slough off the outer layer of the skin. They come in different strengths over the counter or as a prescription. They can be used alone or in combination with a physical exfoliation product.

Before combining these products on your own check with your dermatologist because combinations can cause damage to the outer layer of skin that can result in red, damaged and burned skin. Some products are delivered as combination products, which have been tested and are approved to use on skin. But combining your own over the counter products on your own can result in disaster.

Physical exfoliation products usually have an abrasive agent such as small plastic beads, ground botanicals, jojoba beads or ground nuts. The use of a physical agent helps to remove dead skin cells. The particulate matter in the product can come in different sizes and the type you use will depend upon the application process.

Physical exfoliation is a popular means of cleaning and 'buffing' skin from the tips of the toes to the face. And the product you use on your feet shouldn't be used on the face. Products meant for the body are too harsh for the delicate skin on the face and neck.

Start the process of exfoliation with a clean and wet face. Depending upon your schedule exfoliation can be done in the evening or morning. However, using a product that exfoliates in the morning means you should wait about 20 minutes before putting on your make up to allow the face to rebalance before apply more products that will remain on all day.

Wet your skin, place a small amount of the product in your hand and apply it in gentle circles around your face avoiding the area around the eyes. The skin around the eyes is too delicate for exfoliation. Using a chemical or abrasive product around the eyes will damage the skin in just a short amount of time.

Rinse your face with warm water and pat it dry. Make sure you get all of the product off your face. You may find that using an exfoliation product before showering in the morning allows you to fully rinse your face of all of the particulate matter, as well as rinsing those pesky beads that migrate into your hairline.

Exfoliation should be done once or twice weekly. It will take a week or two to see consistent results that last all week. You'll be very satisfied with the long-term results of cleansing and removing dead cells so your true radiance shines through.

You can choose to purchase an exfoliating product or make one at home. Some great products you can include in an exfoliant are ground oats, milled flax seed, cornmeal, yogurt, honey or buttermilk. A mix of yogurt and ground oats is actually a mix of chemical and abrasive exfoliant because the ground oats are abrasive and the yogurt is chemical (lactic acid in the yogurt).

Mix oatmeal, ½ cup milk and 1 tsp of honey to make a paste. Apply this to your face and let it dry. Rub this off gently with a warm wet washcloth.

Your hands will love ½ cup of granulated sugar, 2 tablespoons of apricot oil, the juice of ½ lemon or 3 drops of lemon essential oil. Combine these and apply them immediately to your hands. Rub this for a minute and then rinse with warm water and moisturizer. Sugar is an excellent exfoliator and apricot oil is a natural lubricant.

Make your feet sing with this nuts scrub. Ready: ½ cup shelled walnuts, 1 tablespoon olive oil, 1 tablespoon of castor oil, 1 teaspoon of honey and 1-2 drops of your favorite essential oil. Blend the nuts in a blender until a fine powder; add the rest of the ingredients to make a paste. Rub your feet with this vigorously and rinse with warm water. This is wonderful when used twice weekly.

Now what about those masks?

Masks have been used by women for centuries to hydrate, soothe or remove oils from the skin. Peoples from different regions tried different materials to make their masks. For instance, people in Egypt used mud and clay while Europeans used milk and raw egg.

It is common to divide the types of facial masks into two different groups. There are the masks designed to hydrate the skin and there are those designed to promote blood flow and tighten the skin. An exfoliating product is usually applied to the skin and washed off. But a mask product is actually applied and left on for a 10 to 15 minute period to allow it to work. Follow this with a layer of moisturizer.

There are many different types of masks that can be made at home. These products are a great way to treat yourself and give your skin the added boost it needs after being assaulted by the many toxins and wastes that float around in our air.

Below are some recipes that you can try at home with assurance that you are using only the best that nature has to offer – because it's directly from nature! If you have a food allergy to any of the ingredients then forgo that recipe and move on to the next.

Look through these recipes – there are a few for dry skin, combination skin, aging skin, acne prone skin and even chapped/sunburned or irritated skin. You should find exactly what you are looking for!

Use a mask directly after having exfoliated. The exfoliation will cleanse the outer skin and remove all dead skin cells before you plump, hydrate or soothe the new cells beneath.

If you are choosing to go with an over the counter product there are several things to consider. First choose a mask that meets the needs of your individual skin type. If you have dry skin over all choose a mask that will rehydrate and add moisture to your skin. And, choose a product that will soften the upper derma of the skin.

Facial Masks ---

Avocado:

The benefits of avocado are wonderful: it is filled with monounsaturated fats, Vitamin B and E, nutrients excellent for moisturizing and rejuvenating dry or tired skin.

Face Mask for Dry and Sensitive Skin

Ingredients:

1 avocado
3-4 drops of almond oil

Prepare by peeling and mashing the avocado and adding the almond oil until the mass is consistent. Apply this to the face while gently massaging. Let it rest for approximately 30 minutes before rinsing off with warm water.

Moisturizing Avocado

Ingredients:

- 1 avocado
- 1 teaspoon of apple vinegar
- 1 egg white
- 3 teaspoons of olive oil

Prepare by peeling and mashing avocado and start adding the rest of the ingredients. The egg whites should be beaten slightly before adding and mixing with the other materials. When the products have reached a consistent texture apply it to your face. Leave this on for 20 minutes and then rinse. This mask helps to add moisture and elasticity back to your skin.

Great for Sun Burned or Irritated Skin

(If irritation is from medication or other medical problems consult with your dermatologist or physician before trying to add anything to the skin surface)

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 tbsp natural yogurt, room temperature (not lowfat or non-fat)
- 1 tsp runny honey (microwave for a few minutes to soften hardened honey)

Prepare by combining the ingredients and applying to your face. Let it sit for 15 minutes and then washing with a steaming wash cloth. If your skin is oily add a few drops of fresh lime juice.

Yogurt Face Mask for Sunburned Skin

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup natural yogurt (we like it just-out-of-the-fridge cold)
- ½ cup oatmeal (any type of basic oatmeal works here)

Prepare by mixing the ingredients together and applying to the skin for 10-15 minutes. Wash this off with a steaming warm washcloth. You can also add egg whites to the ingredients.

Soothing Mask for Oily Skin

INGREDIENTS:

1 banana, preferably ripe (you can keep ripe bananas in the freezer. Let it thaw before using)
1 tbsp honey
An orange or a lemon

Prepare by mixing the banana and honey together. Add a few drops of the juice from an orange or lemon. Apply to your face and leave for 15 minutes before rinsing with a cool wash cloth or a steam warm cloth – which ever you prefer.

Acne Prone Carrot Mask

INGREDIENTS:

2-3 large carrots
4 1/2 tablespoons honey

Prepare by cooking carrots, then mashing them with honey. Apply gently to the skin, wait 10 minutes. Rinse off with cool water.

By the way: Carrots are native to Afghanistan. They were first cultivated in 500 BC in the Mediterranean regions. In approximately the 1600's they were introduced in Europe and England; women used the feathery tops as decorative additions for hats and wore them in their hair. Carrots grow in the wild and are more commonly known as Queen Ann's Lace. They are very high in vitamin A and a source of vitamin C, folacin and potassium. Source: BC Vegetable Marketing Commission

Clay Mask for Oily or Acne Prone Skin

You can pick up clay at most health food stores.

INGREDIENTS:

A basic fuller's earth clay (if skin is sensitive, French green clay is a good option)
1 tsp honey
water (for a richer mask, substitute half-and-half)
your favorite essential oil

Prepare by mixing 2 parts of water to 1 part of clay and mix in a bit of honey. Add more water, or cream, if the clay is too dry. Add a few drops of the essential oil and apply to the face and neck. Keep the mask on for 15 minutes and then remove with a steaming warm washcloth. This mask may require a more thorough rinsing in the shower.

Juice Mask for Oily Skin

Strawberry and lemon juices are natural astringents.

INGREDIENTS:

- * 1/2 tsp lemon juice
- * 1 egg white
- * 1 1/2 tsp honey
- * 1/2 cup strawberries
- * Optional: 2 drops of your favorite essential oils

Prepare by mashing or blending the ingredients together. Apply to the face and leave for 10 minutes. Remove with a steaming warm washcloth.

Combination Skin Rose Mask

INGREDIENTS:

Optional: 6 fresh rose petals
2 tbsp rosewater
1 tbsp natural yogurt, room temperature (not low fat or non-fat)
1 tbsp runny honey (to get honey runny, you can warm it in a microwave for a few seconds).

Prepare by soaking the rose petals in a bowl then crushing them. Add the rosewater, yogurt and honey. Mix the ingredients well and then apply to the skin. Leave this on your face for 10 minutes and then remove by rinsing or using a steaming warm washcloth.

Milk Mask For Dry Skin

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 tsp powdered milk
1/2 tbsp runny honey
1/2 tsp aloe vera gel
1 drops essential oil

Prepare by mixing the ingredients well and applying to the face. Let this work for 15 minutes and washing with warm water.

Home Made Skin Care

Skin care is a daily routine for most women and men. Options for skin care products include over the counter, specialty shops and home made remedies. Over the counter products can contain chemicals that have a negative effect on our health, especially when we can only afford products from the drug store.

While research shows that these chemicals are only hazardous when used on laboratory animals at amounts much higher than would be used in skin care products, what they don't account for is that these same or similar chemicals are used in many products that people come into contact with each and every day.

Your second option are natural and specialty products that whose unique selling point is that they are all natural and don't contain chemicals or products that will endanger your health. Although these products often work well and have great results they are often more costly and expensive than the other over the counter products. They are also often made from natural additives that you can get from common household items or from the health food store in their most natural state.

One of the most common skin care problems for men and women are age spots and liver spots. To get rid of age spots there are no shortage of creams sold over the counter many of which are unsafe and sometimes just plain ineffective.

Even people in their twenties can suffer from hyperpigmentation called melesma. One home remedy for natural skin care is the use of vinegar. You can dilute the vinegar equally with water and use it as an astringent or toner after you've washed. Vinegar is chemically acetic and will also whiten and brighten making your skin smoother and more radiant. Apple cider vinegar or other natural vinegars are recommended, although some people use distilled white vinegar.

Another home remedies for natural skin care to remove pigmentation is to blend onions to get the juice and mix with equal parts of apple cider vinegar. Apply this twice a day with cotton. It will take several weeks to see results. Lemon juice from a fresh lemon over the pigmentation may have a similar effect, and it smells better!

Another problem common to men and women are skin softening issues. You will find that aloe oil, olive oil and coconut oil are natural moisturizers. Find that you skin is dull and dark? Chamomile and lavender are a natural, sweet scented way to rejuvenate your skin.

After you wash your skin many people look for an exfoliating scrub and astringent. Try combining ground cornmeal, oatmeal, apricot seeds and almonds with water to make an

exfoliating scrub. Avoid using this scrub if your skin is sensitive. Using an astringent after washing your face is a good way to complete the cleaning process before moisturizing. Try hazel as a natural astringent that will tone as well.

Looking for a natural all over body scrub (not to be used on the face)? Mix sea salt with a bit of olive oil. Enter a steaming shower and allow your pores to steam open for a minute or two. Then, using your fingertips, massage the sea salt around your skin, avoiding your face. Allow this mixture to sit on your skin in the steaming shower for a minute or two to allow penetration of the minerals.

Now rinse and enjoy the incredible smooth satin skin over your arms and legs!

One of the products you should avoid on your face, at all costs, is bar soap. The chemicals that go into bar soap are harsh and drying. Bar soaps are also pH basic. Our skin is slightly acidic so the combination of bar soap and our skin is damaging.

Instead you can make your own facial wash that is natural, moisturizing and acidic to match the pH of your skin. Mix some plain yogurt with milled flax seed – both found in the grocery store. Wash, rinse and pat dry. A quick mask of avocado afterward will add more moisture and vitamins.

Skin care is best done with nature's own remedies but this option isn't always practical due to the need for fresh ingredients, time and a bit of extra energy. However, if you have this time to pamper your skin you'll be well rewarded in the end.

Slow the Aging Process

There are several ways to slow the aging process – including avoiding the factors that cause the aging process to speed, improve nutrition and keeping your skin hydrated.

But if you want to fix problems that can't currently be reversed with these improvements to your lifestyle then you have to look deeper.

Throughout the dermis other types of protein, notably collagen and elastin, give it strength and flexibility. A reduction in these proteins with age is normal and contributes to the more fragile skin of elderly people.

Medications, in particular steroid drugs, also weaken the collagen fibers, causing thinning of the skin in the long term and an increased tendency to bruising

During pregnancy and other hormonal surges the estrogen and progesterone cause a breakdown in the collagen in the skin making it thinner and less elastic.

Considering your current lifestyle, past damage, and medications what are your options today?

Botox

Botox cosmetic injections are a popular, non-invasive, facelift technique that plastic surgeons use to help eliminate frown lines, crow's feet, and those tiny wrinkles around your mouth. Botox cosmetic injections were used off label for many years as they were first developed and FDA approved for the medical treatment of spasms in patients who suffered from paralysis.

In the early 1980's physicians using the Botox injection for treatment of neurological disorders also recognized that the patients had positive cosmetic changes. They further developed the treatments but had to use them off-label until April 2002 when the FDA finally approved botox for wrinkles.

The active agent in botox cosmetic injections is the bacteria responsible for botulism infections. This toxin, botulinum is responsible for temporary paralysis of skin, muscle, and nerve tissue. Ingestion of the toxin can cause gastrointestinal distress, dilated, unresponsive pupils, and muscle weakness. However, injection of the toxin subcutaneously does not cross the blood brain barrier nor does it cause the other systemic illness.

The botox cosmetic injections used botulinum toxin A for the temporary paralysis and relief of wrinkles. There are approximately 8 different toxins, seven of which actually cause the paralysis necessary for the cosmetic treatment and one of which is currently approved by the FDA.

Doctors at Cornell University in New York warn that, although botox for wrinkles is safe and seemingly effective, wrinkles in the adjacent area can form as the body attempts to recreate the same expressions without using the paralyzed muscle.

For instance, if Botox is used between the eyebrows (one of the most common areas) the muscle in the bridge of the nose, eyelid, and forehead will attempt to recreate the scowl that originally formed the wrinkles. This abnormal use of muscles can often result in new wrinkles. Doctors and patients should be aware of the risks of forming new wrinkles before using botox cosmetic injections for a non-invasive surgical facelift.

The effects of the Botox injection become evident after four to seven days and they last between three to four months. Repeated injections result in muscle atrophy, loss of muscle, which makes the treatments last longer. Other patients become immune to the use of Botox cosmetic injections over time. Current research is being done for approval of one of the seven other types of botox to use after patients no longer respond to treatment.

The risk of new wrinkle formation can be decreased when physician use an altered pattern of injection. In other words, when paralyzing the musculature, they not only include those responsible for the wrinkles, but also adjacent muscles that might be recruited to form the original facial expression responsible for the original wrinkle.

Botox can also be combined with resurfacing techniques, and dermal fillers to improve the outcome and the patient's satisfaction with the results. Botox cosmetic injections are more successfully used in the upper face because the specific muscle groups, which affect facial expression are more easily located than in the lower face. In the lower half of the face, wrinkles are more often static, non-moving, and caused from gravity and the loss of elasticity in the tissue. Whereas in the upper face, wrinkles are more often caused by motion and movement from the muscle below.

Then, When You Want More Than Botox . . .

As people seek to look younger and younger, plastic surgeons continues to open new options for treatment that are surgical, minimally invasive surgery and non-invasive non-surgical. Oftentimes, both men and women seek to change the crows feet, wrinkles, and bags around their eyes. Surgeons have gone from using cosmetic procedures that are open and invasive requiring weeks of recovery to minimally invasive surgeries with minimal to no scarring.

Cosmetic crowfoot surgery can be done using several different techniques. Previously the surgeons only option was to leave the patient with a pulled-back, fake appearance to their face. Today minimally invasive surgery leaves a more natural toned appearance, with a recovery time of seven to ten days. The recovery time can vary depending upon whether other cosmetic surgery was done simultaneously, the length of the surgery, and the general health of the patient prior to the surgery.

Plastic surgeons also have the option of using botox cosmetic injections to decrease wrinkles and cosmetic crowfoot surgery around the eye. In both the minimally invasive surgery and botox injection, the changes in musculature under the skin are addressed.

Another cosmetic crowfoot surgery option that patients have is laser resurfacing. This new procedure has taken the place of the old dermabrasion, which was painful and often didn't give good results. Laser resurfacing is often used to treat crows feet and wrinkles around the eyes. It removes several layers of skin and with it, wrinkles, around the eyes and leaves a tighter, more toned appearance. Although laser resurfacing is extremely effective and safe, it doesn't address the underlying reason for wrinkle formation, the way that minimally invasive surgery and botox do.

Cosmetic crowfoot surgery gives both men and women safe, effective alternatives, which allow them to more closely fit society's desire for the fountain of youth. The question of whether we should be seeking to attain a male dominated vision of beauty through surgical intervention as opposed to seeking a healthy lifestyle is left for another discussion. Suffice it to say that the number of people who will continue to seek the fountain of youth grows as the population grows. It appears that man has been seeking youth for centuries and it isn't about to stop anytime soon.

Acne Prevention Techniques

Acne prevention is important to both teenagers and adults. Although acne is more common in the teenagers who are just entering hormonal changes adults can also suffer from this skin condition.

There are no hard and fast rules about the acne prevention. Some predictable causes include hormonal changes, stress, allergies, drug use, deficient personal hygiene, poor nutrition, and cosmetics. Overzealous scrubbing can also aggravate a condition that is already present.

The skin is the body's largest organ system. It is fed by the food you feed your body. If you feed your body junk it will produce junk, it's just that simple. Acne prevention starts from the inside out. A deeper discussion of nutrition is found in the nutrition section.

A major acne culprit has been associated with eating an unhealthy diet. Some researchers believe that diet has no association with the condition of your skin while others believe that it is highly important. If you understand that your body makes cells based on the nutrition you provide it then you can draw your own conclusions.

An unhealthy diet for your skin is high in oils. Foods such as hamburgers, French fries, ice cream, excessive chocolate and processed foods fall into that category.

Instead substitute a diet high in green leafy vegetables, fruits and trace minerals to encourage acne prevention. Most people are deficient in magnesium and iodine, which are found in sea vegetables, mozzarella cheese, cow's milk, strawberries and spinach. Try to avoid adding supplements but instead use the actual foods to add the minerals and vitamins to your diet.

A diet high in Vitamin A and beta carotene is also beneficial to your skin. You'll find both those essential vitamins in carrots, broccoli and other green leafy vegetables.

Avoid soda at all costs! Fluids are important to your overall health and glow of your skin and they help to flush out the toxins from your body. Water is the best fluid that you can drink. Most other fluids are full of excess sugar and other chemicals that aren't good for you.

Acne prevention also includes good personal hygiene. Keeping the oils from your hair off of your face will help to decrease pimple outbreaks. Keep your hands off your acne! It may be tempting to touch, pick or peel but doing this just aggravates the condition and increases the risk for infection and scarring.

Don't cover your acne with make up or cosmetics. Try to abstain from using makeup at all. Make up aggravates the pimples and makes you look like you have pimples

covered by make up. When you do wear make up use non-comedogenic makeup that doesn't clog your pores.

Sun is actually good for acne prevention but there are several things to remember. Most medication from the doctor and over the counter make you more susceptible to sunburns which will worsen the condition. Tanning may make the pimples less visible but it also speeds the aging process of the skin and increases your risk of skin cancer.

Get plenty of rest. You may think that you can survive on 3 hours of sleep a night and you may for a short time. But, it won't be long before your skin starts showing your lack of sleep and unhealthy lifestyle.

Vitamins for Acne – Crazy or Truth?

People suffering from acne often search for the miracle cure to heal their recurring acne. Vitamins for acne are becoming more popular as people search for not only a cure but a natural cure to fit the new holistic medicine belief system that is prevalent in the news today.

Cleansing regimens, medications, surgical procedures, and a host of over the counter and natural supplements bombard the market on a daily basis. However, much of the success of treating acne comes from treating the body from the inside out – much the way that vitamins for acne claim to work.

Studies have shown that improving your nutritional habits and health will affect the skin. The news is full of information about moving to a more natural diet and healthier lifestyle. Introducing natural foods into the diet will affect the condition of the skin because natural foods address the existing nutritional deficits.

Is there one vitamin for acne that will address all acne issues? Is this truth or fad?

Following several studies scientists could not identify just one vitamin for acne that will clear the skin. But in fact, there is promise that in combination vitamins help to improve the nutritional deficits and improve the condition of the skin. This isn't a new concept since taking one single vitamin doesn't help most other medical conditions either.

Scientists have found that vitamins for acne should be taken together so that they are able to work synergistically. In other words, no vitamin is able to create a healthy environment in the body on it's own. It is important, therefore, to eat a well balanced diet and to take a high quality multi-vitamin supplement each day.

A list of vitamins for acne that are popular to take include:

- **Vitamin B** – which is actually a compilation of many different Vitamin Bs and is an antioxidant working to decrease the free radicals in the body that damage cells and cause disease and illness.
- **Vitamin A** is also an antioxidant that is found in green leafy vegetables, carrots, bananas and oranges.
- **Vitamin E** that heals the skin and prevents further outbreaks.
- **Vitamin C** boosts the immune system.
- **Potassium deficiency** has been associated with acne but it works on the conduction of the heart so too much can cause cardiac problems. Bananas is a good natural source of potassium and you won't have to be concerned with an overdose.

Tea tree oil, although not a vitamin for acne supplement, can help pimples dry out when applied 3-4 times daily. Don't get it in the eyes or take it internally. Be sure of the quality of the Tea Tree Oil. Some manufacturers leave impurities in the oil during processing.

Acne Facials

The causes of acne are varied and there is not concrete evidence of one or two factors that predict acne outbreaks. Some practitioners believe that acne facials are a way to treat acne, since they address some of the identified contributing factors such as increased skin oils and pores clogged by dirt or makeup.

Acne facials can be performed in a spa situation or at home. If you are choosing a spa center for an acne facial do your research first. Get references from friends or relatives, ask questions from your dermatologist or doctor as well as finding the type of technology that the center uses are part of the type of research you want to do before doing an acne facial at the spa.

Many people are finding that acne becomes more of a problem as they age. Along with desiring a more youthful appearance sufferers now have the emotional distress of dealing with a youthful problem.

The goal of acne facials is to cleanse the skin of bacteria and oils, rehydrate, minimize blemishes and blotches that are often caused by acne outbreaks. Acne facials will also remove the outer dead layer of skin and environmental pollutants that settle on the skin during the day.

There are three parts to an acne facial. There is the cleaning portion, a steaming massage and the final facial mask. These facials can be purchased in a health food store as a package or in the individual parts.

The cleaning portion helps to remove environmental pollutants, bacteria and oils. In the next phase a steam massage increases blood flow through the skin which helps to get rid of toxins, relax facial muscles and soften whiteheads and blackheads which helps them to be removed more easily.

The final facial mask helps to remove dead skin cells and rehydrate the face. It also helps to tone and clarify the skin. This portion is especially effective in the treatment of dry skin that is affected by acne.

This method of cleansing is best for people in their mid to late 20's. If you are younger there are better methods of treating and cleaning skin that suffers from acne blemishes. Don't forget to get the opinion of your dermatologist when you are considering an acne facial. The dermatologist will consider your skin type, oil level, skin sensitivity and your age before recommending the product that is best for you.

Skin care and acne treatments are a person journey. No two people react the same or have the same results to skin care products. Because of this you should be careful when you choose your products and calendar your results.

Take care of your skin and it will take of you!