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Changing SKIN CARE

Tips to nourish your skin as it ages

By Melissa Erickson
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Skin care is a personal decision: Should you age gracefully and naturally or strive for younger-looking skin?

“Some people can do both at the same time. Most of us need a little help to age gracefully,” said Dr. Rebecca Baxt, board-certified dermatologist at Baxt Cosmedical in Paramus, New Jersey.

Instead of focusing on either natural or younger-looking skin, the goal should be healthy skin.

“Healthy skin helps women feel more confident and beautiful, so I think women should think about protecting and enhancing their skin as they age,” said New York City dermatologist Dr. Elizabeth K. Hale of Complete Skin MD. “This does not mean they have to resort to procedures they are not comfortable with, but it means using a daily sunscreen and finding a topical skin care regimen that will help protect and nourish their skin.”

Because sun damage is built up over a lifetime, daily sunscreen is a must.

“Sun damage is cumulative, which means it is never too late to protect oneself. There are good studies out of New Zealand and Australia that have shown that even starting to protect one’s skin at age 50 and 60 can result in fewer precancers, skin cancers and even brown spots down the road,” said Hale, who is also a clinical associate professor of dermatology at the New York University Langone Medical Center. “It is never too late and it is the best thing to do to keep one’s skin looking youthful and healthy.”

“Women should avoid doing too much, so they don’t make their skin look irritated or their look unnatural. ... Lasers and injections can be done very naturally to improve one’s appearance without looking done.”

Dr. Elizabeth K. Hale

“Choose a product that is broad-spectrum and water-resistant with an SPF of 30 or higher,” said Dr. Meghan Feely, a board certified dermatologist in New Jersey and New York City who serves as a clinical instructor in Mount Sinai’s Department of Dermatology. Be sure to reapply sunscreen every two hours, Feely said.

As people age the skin thins, making dry skin a common complaint. Skin thins because of different causes, including a reduction in collagen and elastin from ultraviolet light and a decrease in estrogen levels in menopause, Feely said.

“To retain moisture in the skin, look for products that contain ceramides or humectants such as hyaluronic acid. Limit shower time to five to 10 minutes. Use tepid water and a gentle cleanser, as hot water draws moisture out of the skin, compromising its lipid bilayer,” Feely said.

A healthy, balanced diet with lots of

preferably organic fruits and vegetables and lots of water will help give your skin the nutrition it needs, said Baxt.

In the quest to turn back the clock, some people tend to overdo it with products and procedures.

“Women should avoid doing too much, so they don’t make their skin look irritated or their look unnatural. ... Lasers and injections can be done very naturally to improve one’s appearance without looking done,” Hale said.

Additionally, watch what products are used together.

“For example, retinol is a great ingredient to keep skin looking young and healthy. So is glycolic acid. But using them both together can result in dry, irritated skin, which can look worse than where you started,” Hale said. “Also, a little Botox or a little filler done right can be helpful and youth-enhancing, but too much can create a frozen and unnatural look. Less is often more.”



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