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Skincare Spotlight



**Beauty Sleep:  
Myth or Necessity?**

Learn about its physiological effects on skin and why you should be selling night creams.

by Ada S. Polla

**I HAVE FACED THIS QUESTION MANY TIMES, AND** I am sure that estheticians, skincare retailers and beauty professionals overall do too: Why do I need a night cream instead of being able to use the same moisturizer twice a day? Is the need for a night cream a true need, or a marketing myth meant to sell more products?

**BEAUTY SLEEP**

Before delving into the mystery that is a night cream, let's look at sleep. After all, if there is something special needed topically for the skin during sleep, it has to do with the physiological effects of sleep on the skin.

We know that insomnia has damaging effects on the human body, including the skin, and accelerates the overall aging process. Poor sleep is known to raise cortisol levels and elevate blood sugar, which causes tissue damage via inflammation. Growth hormones are also adversely affected by a lack of sleep.

As was recently reported in *GCI* magazine, a study performed by Estée Lauder at University Hospitals Case Medical Center in Cleveland demonstrated that sleep quality impacts skin function and aging. Specifically at the level of the skin, poor sleep has been linked to a disruption of the moisture skin barrier and UV damage repair. Indeed, sleep-deprived women show signs of premature skin aging and a decrease in their skin's ability to recover after sun exposure. Furthermore, poor-quality sleepers also show increased signs of intrinsic skin aging (as opposed to environmental aging), such as fine lines, uneven pigmentation and reduced elasticity.

"Our study is the first to conclusively demonstrate that inadequate sleep is correlated with reduced skin health and accelerated skin aging. Sleep-deprived women show signs of premature skin aging and a decrease in their skin's ability to recover after sun exposure," explains Dr. Elma Baron, director of the study. Dr. Daniel Yarosh, senior vice president, basic science research, R&D, at Estée Lauder, adds: "This research shows for the first time that

poor sleep quality can accelerate signs of skin aging and weaken the skin's ability to repair itself at night."

All of this indicates that deep, sound sleep can be induced by certain botanicals, which would be one reason why a night cream might differ from a day cream.

**DAY VERSUS NIGHT DIFFERENCES**

There are obvious differences between day and night, and this includes when looking at the skin. These differences can be classified into three broad categories, namely physiological, environmental and behavioral differences.

**PHYSIOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES**

This skin's circadian rhythm represents physiological differences. One of the most researched circadian rhythms associated with the skin is sebum production, which is shown to peak at midday and significantly decrease during the night. In addition:

- Transepidermal water loss has also been shown to peak in the evening hours.
- The skin's temperature is highest during the night. (This is linked to increased blood flow.)
- And the skin is more acidic during the night.

All of these physiological characteristics indicate that the skin is potentially more delicate and prone to inflammation or irritation at night.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DIFFERENCES**

There is obviously the absence of UV rays during the night. This is important when using products or ingredients known to make the skin photosensitive (and one

of the reasons why retinol-based products, for example, are recommended for evening use).

Furthermore, environmental stresses, such as pollution and extreme temperatures and temperature fluctuations, are less relevant during the night.

**BEHAVIORAL DIFFERENCES**

We do not wear makeup, drink alcohol, smoke tobacco or engage in other stressful behaviors during the night.

This suggests that the skin gets a reprieve from the assaults of the day, and thus is able to focus on its repair

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processes and repair the various damages caused during the day.

Once again, all of these differences indicate that a different moisturizer in the morning versus the evening is indeed scientifically sound and not a mere marketing ploy.

**THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN A NIGHT MOISTURIZER**

When deciding on quality nighttime moisturizers, here are a few things to keep in mind.

Look for creams containing botanicals that have soothing, relaxing, anti-anxiety, sleep-inducing properties to help the body into deep sleep. (The beneficial effects to the skin here are less about the botanicals themselves, and more a matter of deeper sleep, which can be enhanced by such botanicals.) Look for lavender, various herbs used in Chinese medicine (e.g., wild jujube seed, bupleurum root, senega snakeroot).

The skin's ability to repair itself peaks at night, which means that creams containing repairing ingredients

## Skincare Spotlight

(versus the protective ingredients you would look for in day creams) will enhance this process. Vitamins A and C are examples of such ingredients.

The body absorbs more nutrients during sleep; so nighttime moisturizers should contain more nourishing and hydrating agents. Look for vitamin E, hyaluronic acid, and various plant oils.

### It's hard to argue that a night cream is purely a marketing tactic.

Ingredients that increase the skin's photosensitivity (as previously mentioned) should be used exclusively at night. These include:

- AHAs, such as lactic acid or glycolic acid
- Benzoyl peroxide, often used in anti-

acne products

- BHAs, such as salicylic acid
- Hydroquinone
- Retinol and retinol derivatives
- Some natural ingredients, such as citrus oils, peppermint oils, lavender and others that may increase photosensitivity

Of course, as is the case with any topic worthy of discussion, both sides of

the issue can be debated. Many skincare lines promote a simple routine focused on a minimalist regimen and fewer products. A number of brands offer one single great moisturizer and do not differentiate between day and night. Think for example

of La Mer. Paula Begoun of Paula's Choice believes night creams are unnecessary.

Regardless of the side you take in this debate, I do believe there are a few things we can all agree on:

- First, there is enough evidence to suggest that the skin might indeed benefit from an evening cream. (Even if the evidence is inconclusive, it's hard to argue that the idea of a night cream is purely a marketing tactic.)
- Second, most people will indeed, if nothing else, prefer a lighter-weight cream for the day; in particular, if layering sunscreen and/or foundation on top of it.
- And third, a moisturizer with SPF is not adequate for the evening. Thus, if you use a day cream with SPF (which everyone should), you definitely do need a different moisturizer for the evening.
- At the end of the day, or at least at the

end of my day, I go by what my father, Dr. Luigi L. Polla, says and recommends. He believes in night creams for all of the reasons mentioned above. So I use a day cream and a night cream—and they are not one and the same. And, last but not least, whether or not you use a nighttime moisturizer, sleep on your back. Again per my father, that is one of the best antiaging strategies there is! ■

*Ada S. Polla is the president and CEO of Alchimie Forever. She is the co-creator of her family's Swiss-based skincare line, which she launched in the United States in 2004. Her skincare knowledge and business skills have yielded double-digit annual revenue growth for the brand. She holds an MBA from Georgetown University and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Harvard University.*