

Beauty trend: Is the Korean skin care routine right for you?



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Koreans believe multilayering products, morning and night, is the key to youthful skin. **Fotolia** - TNS

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Most Americans view face washing and moisturizing as a pretty complete daily skin care regimen. But compared to the 10-plus-step skin care routines many Koreans practice, our simplified method seems elementary. And with K-beauty trends remaining as hot as ever, maybe they're on to something.

Koreans believe that multilayering several products, morning and night, is the key to obtaining and maintaining beautiful, youthful skin.

"People in Korea take skin care very seriously, and it's taught from a very young age," says Charlotte Cho, board-certified esthetician and co-founder of Soko Glam, a Korean lifestyle and beauty retailer with a vast selection of Korean beauty products.

Cho says she commits about 15 minutes every morning and night to her skin, not counting when she chooses to use a sheet mask.

Korean men also partake in multilayering skin care routines.

Kerry Thompson of Raleigh, co-author of the book "Korean Beauty Secrets" and owner of the blog Skin and Tonics (skinandtonics.com), says in Korea, "men are much more invested in skin care compared to American men. It's not uncommon for a Korean man to have more than five steps in his skin care routine."

A daily Korean skin care routine typically consists of double-cleansing with a makeup remover and cleanser, and then using an exfoliator, toners, an essence, serums, a sheet mask, eye cream, moisturizer, sun protection and lip care. Peels, wash-away masks, sleeping masks and sheet masks are supplemental components that are not used daily. For additional benefits and natural coverage, BB creams and CC creams are used in the morning.

For beginners

Before trying anything new, it is important to know your skin type so you can choose the right products.

“Combination skin is characterized by an excess of oil in the T-zone (across forehead, down nose to the chin area),” says Tia Teasley, a board-certified esthetician for Benefit at Belk-Crabtree. “Dry is characterized by fine pores and possible flaking or rough-textured skin due to a lack of hydration. Oily skin types are best characterized by excess oil, larger, more visible pores that may be more prone to blackheads.”

If you have trouble establishing your skin type, Teasley recommends consulting a licensed esthetician or dermatologist.

When trying a new product, Thompson says it’s essential to space each product at least a week apart. “That way, if you have a reaction to something, it will be easier to identify which product or ingredient caused it,” she says.

For those wanting to wade in slowly, Thompson recommends starting with a cleanser, a refresher/toner, an essence or serum, a moisturizer and a sunscreen in the morning. “These are the most crucial components for beautiful, healthy skin – but are still manageable.” She also strongly recommends double-cleansing if you wear makeup.

Kimberly Arnold is a Raleigh-based makeup artist and beauty writer. On Twitter: @beautybrainNC.

THE KOREAN SKIN CARE ROUTINE

Exfoliating

Exfoliators are typically used after the skin has been cleansed, but only weekly or bi-monthly. But Teasley believes exfoliation can be done up to twice a week with a non-professional grade product at home, or once a month with a professional grade exfoliant (such as microdermabrasion or chemical peels) – and only by a licensed professional or dermatologist. She warns that “over-exfoliating could strip the skin and cause damage.”

- For All Skin Types: Kate Somerville ExfoliKate Gentle Exfoliating Treatment, \$65, [Sephora.com](https://www.sephora.com)
- For Men: Marlowe No.122 Men’s Facial Scrub, \$8.99, [Target.com](https://www.target.com)