



The Absolutely No-Fail, No-Nonsense Guide to BEAUTIFUL SKIN

Because nobody should be using the same skincare stuff year after year (skin *changes*, as you've probably noticed)—and because new and vastly improved products are coming along all the time—here are the upgrades and updates you need to know about now.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY FERNANDO MILANI

For many of us, the way our skin looks in the morning dictates, like the weather, what kind of day we might have. We get out of bed, skip (or stagger) over to the mirror, and peer at our reflection as if we were peering out the window. What did the day blow in? A clear, calm complexion? A shower of breakouts? A mist of fine lines? A gloomy new cumulus of dark spots?

We can't control the weather, but we *can* take charge of our skin. On that front, right now, there is very good news. A great-looking complexion is more achievable than ever, and that doesn't mean you have to devote your life to it or spend a fortune. Moisturizers have improved: Hyaluronic acid, immensely helpful in carrying

moisture to the skin, has made formulas more smoothing and effective. Active ingredients like retinol, antioxidants, and peptides intensify the potency of all kinds of products, says Mary Lupo, MD, clinical professor of dermatology at Tulane University School of Medicine. And many of the newest formulas penetrate better because ingredients are delivered in smaller molecules.

To help you in your quest for brighter horizons complexion-wise, we talked to top dermatologists across the country about what it takes to get gorgeous skin, and came up with this straightforward, thorough, easy-to-follow, bottom-line guide for every age. ▶

Oprah/Nov 2007

"I'm Too Old for Acne!"

You've heard of adult acne. But how is it different from teenage acne? It's not. "Acne is acne. And you're an adult," says Ranella Hirsch, MD, president-elect of the American Society of Cosmetic Dermatology & Aesthetic Surgery. The reasons you may be breaking out are varied: the hormonal changes of pregnancy, perimenopause, menopause, or stress. Treat acne with a good over-the-counter product containing benzoyl peroxide, which kills bacteria (try Clinique Acne Solutions Emergency Gel-Lotion, \$13.50), and salicylic acid, which unclogs pores (try Clean & Clear Advantage Acne Spot Treatment, \$6.50), says Mary Lupo, MD, clinical professor of dermatology at Tulane University School of Medicine. If it doesn't clear up in three months, see a dermatologist. Lupo recommends the CoolTouch laser, because it mitigates fine lines, helps with acne scarring, and reduces active acne by shrinking the oil glands. Retinoids also help clear up acne, and have the added benefit of reducing fine lines, stimulating collagen, and improving discoloration due to sun damage.

⌘ Hormonal changes can cause acne and rosacea.

⌘ Slow cell turnover makes the complexion lose some of its glow.

⌘ Sun damage can give skin a blotchy, ruddy look.

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THOSE GREAT BEACH VACATIONS you took in your teens are showing up on your face: You're beginning to see cumulative sun damage in the form of blotchiness, red spots, and ruddiness. You're also losing more collagen and elasticity, and your skin retains less moisture. Because it doesn't reflect light evenly, your complexion is losing some of its glow. Hormonal changes due to perimenopause can cause acne and rosacea. (See "I'm Too Old for Acne!" above, and "Seeing Red," opposite page.)

YOUR NO-FAIL PLAN

Cleanser: Use a creamy (rather than gel) cleanser morning and night, unless you can tolerate one with a mild AHA or salicylic acid once a day, says Ava T. Shamban, MD, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at UCLA. (Try NIA 24 Gentle Cleansing Cream, \$30, or Lumene Radiant Touch Moisturizing Cream Cleanser, \$10; Bliss Steep Clean Cleansing Milk with salicylic acid, \$32, is also a good one.)

Moisturizer: Supplement your broad-spectrum moisturizer, which should contain SPF 15 or 20, with a couple of creams, lotions, or serums containing at least two types

of antioxidants, such as lycopene, green tea, or soy, alternating them every other day, says Shamban. (Try Skin Effects by Dr. Jeffrey Dover Wrinkle Effects Relaxing Cream with Lycopene, \$30; Boscia Balancing Facial Tonic, \$18; and Arcona Gentle Skin Repair PM, \$48.) You'll get a wider benefit from switching off, because different antioxidants address different problems, says Shamban. Or, if your skin is beginning to look crepey, try a formula with peptides, which have been shown to strengthen collagen, says Hirsch. Treat dryness with a rich moisturizing cream that contains hyaluronic acid, petrolatum, shea butter, or oils. (We like CeraVe Moisturizing Cream, \$15; L'Occitane Ultra Rich Face Cream, \$36; and Shiseido Bio-Performance Advanced Super Revitalizer Cream, \$70.)

Nighttime treatment: A prescription retinoid is the way to go, say both Hirsch and Shamban. It reduces brown spots, increases exfoliation and collagen production, thickens the epidermis, and can reverse precancerous sun damage. If your skin doesn't tolerate a retinoid every night, use it every other night.

Oprah/Nov 2007