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MARCH 2014
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Experimentation is expensive! We turned to top doctors for skin care advice, product picks, and no-hype daily routines to be sure you're getting the best

face value

BY HANNAH MORRILL

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Unpronounceable ingredients, complicated regimens, an unending array of pricey products. You shouldn't have to have a master's degree in chemistry—or a trust fund—to look your absolute youngest. This smart yet simple skin care primer will demystify the world of lotions and potions—and ultimately help you turn back the complexion clock.

Target your top concern

Wrinkles, dark spots, and ruddiness can all make you look older. You'll reap the most dramatic rewards, though, if you tackle what worries you most. A dermatologist can help you mix and match.

WRINKLES



CLEANSER > A gentle exfoliating cleanser like **Derma E Glycolic Facial Cleanser** (\$14.95; dermae.com) increases cell turnover to reveal younger-looking skin, says Mary Lupo, a dermatologist in New Orleans.



SUNSCREEN > Temporarily plump deep grooves as you shield damaging rays with a hydrating sunscreen like **Eucerin Daily Protection Moisturizing Face Lotion SPF 30** (\$9.49; drugstores).



DAY TREATMENT > Your serum should check two boxes: 1. Antioxidants, to fight crinkle-causing free radicals. 2. Peptides, to build new, unlined skin. Try **Philosophy Time in a Bottle** (\$74; philosophy.com).



NIGHT TREATMENT > "Nothing beats high-potency retinol," Texas dermatologist Lisa Garner says. **Neutrogena Rapid Wrinkle Repair Night** (\$21.99; drugstores) pairs it with hydrating hyaluronic acid.

DARK SPOTS



CLEANSER > Lift away pigment patches with an exfoliating cleanser that contains mild acids like **La Roche-Posay Mela-D Deep Cleansing Brightening Foaming Cream** (\$25; drugstores).



SUNSCREEN > Dark marks are often caused by sun; get serious about breaking the cycle with a heavy-duty protector like **Shiseido Urban Environment Oil-Free UV Protector SPF 42** (\$30; shiseido.com), which still feels featherlight on the skin.



DAY TREATMENT > **Olay Regenerist Luminous Tone Perfecting Cream** (\$24.99; drugstores) evens mottled complexions with a blend of Vitamin B3, peptides and skin brighteners.



NIGHT TREATMENT > "Retinols are proven to fade dark splotches and soften wrinkles," Lupo says. **Dr. Dennis Gross Ferulic Acid + Retinol Brightening Solution** (\$85; sephora.com) combines the vitamin A derivative with naturally brightening bearberry extract.

RUDDINESS



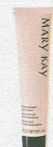
CLEANSER > Frothy cleansers strip away soothing oils, leaving raw skin even more raw. Nonlathering versions for sensitive skin like **Dove Derma Series Ultra Caring Skin Cleanser** (\$15.99; drugstores) won't cause flare-ups.



SUNSCREEN > Physical blockers like zinc and titanium oxide are less irritating than chemical shields. Try **EltaMD UV Clear SPF 46** (\$29.85, soap.com), which also contains the anti-inflammatory niacinamide.



DAY TREATMENT > A fiery complexion is often the sign of a compromised skin barrier. Translation? Red skin equals thirsty skin. Go for a gentle but quenching moisturizer like **Cerave Moisturizing Cream** (\$16.69, cvs.com).



NIGHT TREATMENT > Retinols are too intense for sensitive skin, Garner says. Instead try a simple but ultra-soothing night cream like **Mary Kay Extra Emollient Night Cream** (\$14, marykay.com).

Earn extra credit

Want to do more than the bare minimum to get your best skin yet? Think of these products as boosters for your beauty routine:

EYE CREAMS Ultra-hydrating salves that plump crow's feet, calm puffiness, and camouflage undereye circles. If your aim is simply to soften lines, try applying your regular facial treatments to the area; you might find they work just as well, says Zoe Draelos, a North Carolina dermatologist.

MASKS Treatments that deliver potent ingredients directly to the skin for immediate—albeit temporary—results. Moisturizing creams and sheet masks plump lines in minutes. Acne-prone patients are best served by the oil-absorbing properties of clay or charcoal formulas.

SCRUBS Cleansing gels or creams spiked with grainy bits to physically slough away dirt, dead skin cells, and impurities. "Scrubs are great for intense exfoliation on oily or combination skin, but go easy. The process should never hurt," Garner says.

PEELS Rinse-off acidic formulas that—generally more gently than scrubs—loosen bonds between the cells to whisk away dead skin. Glycolic, alpha hydroxy, citric, and salicylic acids are all common active ingredients. Skin care brushes can lend a similar brightening effect.

OILS Trend alert: Lots of cleansers and serums now come in oil- rather than water-base versions. It's all about personal preference, Garner says. If you have dry skin, you might find that beauty oils make skin feel softer.

