

# Enjoy the Skin You're In

Good skin care can take you from season to season with less irritation and less damage.

bring out the itch all over, it's time to arm yourself with information that can help you promote youthful and sexy, touchable and healthy skin year-round.

## The Unsexy Details

Skin is comprised of two layers, Small says. The top layer, the epidermis, contains pigmentation cells. The second layer, the dermis, contains collagen, elastic tissue, muscles, oil and sweat glands, hair follicles, blood vessels, and nerve endings. The epidermis is what we present to the world, as well as the sun. The dermis is the foundation that contains the skin's structural fibers.

But not all skin is the same, Small says. Facial skin, especially around your eyes, is much thinner than the skin on the rest of your body and contains more oil glands. Your lips have specialized skin full of blood vessels. Gender plays a role in the makeup of your skin, as well, with males tending to have more oil glands. And while both male and female skin looks the same before puberty, after puberty kicks in, testosterone in men gives them a beard and thicker skin. Because women's skin is thinner and more elastic, wrinkles can be more apparent as they age. But Small says it's a myth that men's skin ages less.

"A man's skin in general may look more

Don't look now but your skin is showing.

Your skin is amazing. The largest "organ" of your body, your skin is the interface between the outside world and your internal organs. Your skin contains and moves with



muscles to express your emotions. It protects you from the sun, wind, heat, and cold. Its numerous nerve endings give you sensory information. It contains sweat glands that release perspiration to moderate your

body temperature. When we're young we take it for granted, but your skin tells all. It's worth taking care of, says Elizabeth A. Small, M.D. Small is a dermatologist at Carle Clinic and Fellow of the American Academy of Dermatology (FAAD).

"If you didn't have your skin, you wouldn't survive. It is often overlooked by concerns of heart disease and cancer, but it's actually very important," Small says.

Good skin care can take you from season to season with less irritation and less damage. As winter's brisk winds threaten to redden your cheeks and

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firm, less saggy because it's thicker," she says. "But men can easily look as wrinkled as a woman. Men's skin does show age."

But no matter your gender, if you want comfortable, sexy skin to live in, Small reminds us that it's important to pay attention to your skin, provide it with a certain level of care, and protect it.

Small says our skin is affected by intrinsic and extrinsic aging. Intrinsic is normal, unstoppable aging and is affected by our genetic makeup. But extrinsic is what we put our skin through and comes from the outside.

"Extrinsic aging is what you have some control over," Small says.

To minimize the effects of extrinsic aging, Small says prevention is key. Avoid smoking and extreme temperatures. But most of all, avoid excessive sun exposure. Sun exposure exacerbates the signs of aging—facial lines and wrinkles, redness, and age spots—as well as increases the chance for skin cancer.

"When your body starts making pigmentation, it's actually trying to protect you," she says. "Dermatologists preach wearing sunscreen from day one. ...And stay away from tanning beds. The Skin Cancer Foundation...suggests 'Live in your own skin.' If you're light complected, don't try to be dark."

Although how your skin ages is influenced by your genes and your exposure to outside elements, Small says a good skin care regime can improve your skin's health and appearance.

"Even if you wait to start until you're in your 40s, you have a pretty good chance of maintaining your skin and minimizing signs of aging," she says.

#### Sexy Skin

Small says there is a vast array of over-the-counter topical treatments for men and women to choose from, but first, it's important to know your skin type. Most people have some combination of dry, oily, or normal. Dry skin usually benefits most from rich and creamy products, whereas the same products may prompt acne in oily skin. But all skin types can benefit from a simple regime of daily cleansing with a mild liquid cleanser and lukewarm water for your face and mild soap for your body. After washing be sure to just pat dry, then apply moisturizer for you skin type. In the morning, always apply an SPF 30 sunscreen—year-round. At night just moisturize.

Beyond the basics, today's facial skin care options offer more than ever before.



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Small recommends using an exfoliating product that features alpha-hydroxy acids, which improve firmness and add luster to your skin. At night it's important to use a Vitamin A product featuring retinol. The most current approaches in skin care emphasize limiting damage caused by free radicals. This is done by incorporating antioxidants in skin care products.

"When you have oxidative stress to the skin, such as sun, pollution, environmental changes, you release free radicals," Small says. "The free radicals cause massive damage to your skin. The big push is to use products that capture those free radicals so that they don't damage the skin."

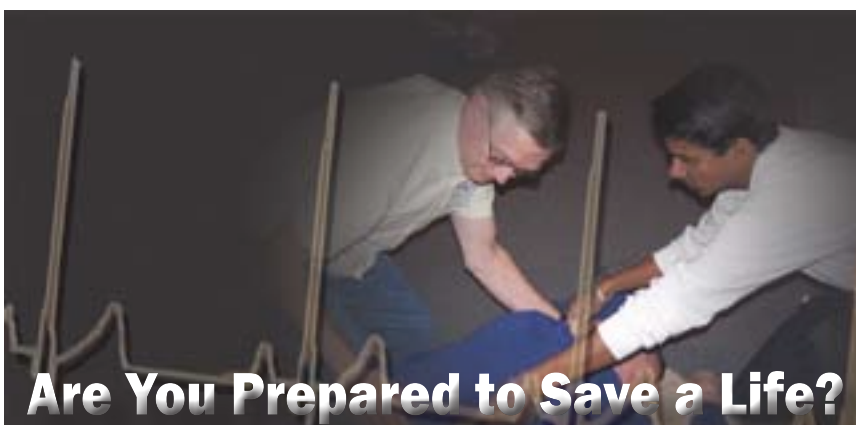
Small says prescription products are much stronger, but over-the-counter products, such as those that feature Vitamin C, botanicals, and natural substances like green tea and licorice, are effective at limiting the effects of free radicals.

For more specific recommendations to keep your skin glowing, Small says an expert can help out. Aestheticians, frequently found in doctor's offices or salons, are trained in performing procedures such as facial chemical peels. Or if you have any questions or problems, you can visit your dermatologist. If you're looking for more extensive facial work, a cosmetic dermatologist or plastic surgeon has a long list of procedures to consider, including injections of the botulism toxin (commonly known as Botox), scalpel-less face lifts that utilize injected fillers, and the newest laser treatments, all which can improve your skin's appearance and are safe when done by experts.

### Love Your Skin

Your skin reflects not only the treatment you've given it but also the general health of your body. So Small says do your skin a favor, exercise regularly to increase blood flow to your skin; eat plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, olive oils, whole grains, and fatty fishes; and drink lots of water to keep hydrated. In winter, also use a room humidifier, wear cotton-blends next to your skin, and take vitamin D supplements.

Small says once you've got all the basics of protection and care covered, relax. Don't stress out trying to reach an unattainable and unnatural state of idealized appearance. Enjoy the skin you're in. ■■



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