

Herbal Remedies for a Lifetime of Healthy Skin

Excerpted from *Naturally Healthy Skin*, by Stephanie Tourles



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Introduction

“Smoother, younger-looking skin in seven days. Guaranteed or your money back.” How many times have you fallen for that marketing ploy? Most cosmetic companies are adept at knowing which buttons to push to entice you to purchase their merchandise and empty your wallet in a flash, with promises of restored youth. These companies prey on your emotions and insecurities, all in the guise of making you look and feel better about yourself. But the cosmetics and body-care industry is in business solely to make money — and skin-care products have one of the highest price markups of any commodity on the market.

In contrast, *Herbal Remedies for a Lifetime of Healthy Skin* takes a holistic approach to skin care. Healthy skin is directly related to proper skin care, sound nutrition, and a sensible wellness program. While we often don't consider our skin as a functioning part of our bodies, it is in fact the body's largest organ. Your skin is constantly transmitting and receiving information. If something is amiss, your skin displays signs of distress. If all is well, it displays radiance. Natural and herbal remedies can enhance your overall health as well as treat the more specific conditions of the skin. However, you must keep in mind that at any age, health within is reflected by beautiful skin without. To age gracefully, you must first live healthfully.

Super Foods and Other Essentials for a Fabulous Face and Body

Good skin care begins with good nutrition — what you put in your body is reflected on your face. The following information explains how to nourish the very foundation of your skin and improve your well-being with the essential vitamins and minerals most important for healthy, vibrant skin.

Essential Vitamins

Powerhouse vitamins provide a potent combination of antioxidants and healing agents that boost your skin's ability to make you look your glowing best.

Vitamin A (Beta-Carotene)

Description: Fat-soluble antioxidant

Skin-Care Benefits: Essential for growth and maintenance of epithelial (skin) tissue and proper functioning of mucous membranes. Helps prevent dry, rough skin and premature aging. Speeds healing, especially of acne, impetigo, and vision problems. Boosts immunity. Aids against premature wrinkles, acne, blackheads, psoriasis, and dry, rough, thick, itchy, scaly, cracked skin.

Outstanding Sources: Liver (fish liver oil, especially), blue-green algae, pumpkins and winter squashes, alfalfa, carrots, cayenne pepper, dandelion greens, parsley, spinach, apricots, beet greens, broccoli, sweet potatoes, kale, lettuce, endive, cantaloupe, watermelon, tomatoes.



B-Complex Vitamins

Description: Water-soluble nutrients. The B vitamins — thiamine, riboflavin, niacin, B₅, B₁₂, folate, pantothenate, PABA, inositol, biotin, and choline — are grouped together as a complex because when naturally occurring, they are always found together. If you must supplement, be sure to take one that supplies the entire complex.

Skin-Care Benefits: The antistress vitamin helps prevent premature aging and acne and promotes healthy circulation and metabolism. Essential for wound healing (sunburn, bruises, infections). Aids new cell growth. Increases vitality. Helps against eczema, skin lesions, dandruff, pale complexion, pigmentation problems, premature wrinkles.

Outstanding Sources: Lean beef, chicken, egg yolks, liver, milk, brewer's yeast, whole grains, alfalfa, almonds, sunflower seeds, soy products, green leafy vegetables, blue-green algae, fresh wheat germ, molasses, peas, beans.



Vitamin C

Description: Water-soluble antioxidant

Skin-Care Benefits: Helps produce collagen in connective tissue. Strengthens capillary walls, speeds healing, and helps battle environmental stress and toxins. Aids against wrinkles, sagging skin, premature aging.

Outstanding Sources: Rose hips, citrus fruits, tomatoes, berries, pineapple, apples, persimmons, acerola cherries, broccoli, green leafy vegetables, potatoes, bell and hot peppers, currants, papayas.

Vitamin D

Description: Fat-soluble nutrient

Skin-Care Benefits: Combined with vitamin A, helps treat acne and herpes simplex, slows premature aging, enhances bone mineralization and calcium absorption.

Outstanding Sources: Fish liver oils, herring, mackerel, salmon, sardines, tuna, fortified milk, fortified soy milk, alfalfa, watercress, egg yolks, organ meats, sunshine.

Vitamin E

Description: Fat-soluble antioxidant

Skin-Care Benefits: Oxygenates tissues, increases body's stores of vitamin A, protects tissues of skin and eyes, slows premature aging, speeds healing of severe burns and chronic skin lesions. May decrease scarring.

Outstanding Sources: Cold-pressed vegetable oils, whole grains, eggs, alfalfa, parsley, sprouted seeds and nuts, fresh wheat germ, green leafy vegetables.

Essential Minerals

Minerals are the building blocks of gorgeous skin. Four minerals in particular are necessary for the proper growth of healthy, luminous, resilient skin: iodine, silicon, sulfur, and zinc.

Iodine

Skin-Care Benefits: Aids in healing skin infections. Increases oxygen consumption and metabolic rate in the skin. Helps prevent roughness and premature wrinkling. Fights poor skin tone, dry skin.

Outstanding Sources: Fish, shellfish, blue-green algae, sunflower seeds, kelp, iodized salt, sea salt.

Silicon

Skin-Care Benefits: Aids in collagen formation, keeps skin taut, strengthens bones and skin tissue, helps prevent wrinkles, improves skin tone, sagging skin.

Outstanding Sources: Horsetail, blue-green algae, nettles, echinacea root, dandelion root, alfalfa, kelp, flaxseed, oat straw, barley grass, wheat grass, apples, berries, burdock root, beets, onions, almonds, peanuts, sunflower seeds, grapes.

Sulfur

Skin-Care Benefits: Called the beauty mineral. Helps keep skin clear and smooth. Fights eczema, acne.

Outstanding Sources: Turnips, dandelion greens, radishes, horseradish, string beans, onions, garlic, cabbage, celery, kale, watercress, soybeans, fresh fish, lean meats, eggs, asparagus.

Zinc

Skin-Care Benefits: Aids in wound healing, promotes cell growth, boosts immunity, and helps treat acne when combined with vitamins A and B. Fights dandruff.

Outstanding Sources: Blue-green algae, barley grass, alfalfa, yellow dock root, echinacea root, kelp, dulse, fresh wheat germ, pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, brewer's yeast, milk, eggs, fish, oysters, green leafy vegetables, onions, beans, nuts.

THE SKIN-SO-SMOOTHIE SUPERFOOD

I refer to this breakfast as my “antistress breakfast boost” formula. It’s loaded with complexion-enhancing, stress-reducing B vitamins, calcium, potassium, iron, fiber, protein, and complex carbohydrates for sustained energy. I love the taste, but if you’re not crazy about brewer’s yeast, the flavor may take a bit of getting used to.



1 frozen banana or 1 cup (250 ml) frozen strawberries

2 cups (500 ml) low-fat milk or fortified soy milk

1 tablespoon (15 ml) brewer’s yeast

2 teaspoons (10 ml) blackstrap molasses

2 teaspoons (10 ml) raw sunflower seeds

1 teaspoon (5 ml) raw sesame seeds

10 raw almonds

¼ cup (60 ml) raw or cooked oatmeal

2 teaspoons (10 ml) wildflower honey

¼ teaspoon (1.3 ml) ground cinnamon

2–3 ice cubes (optional — makes a thick, frosty drink)

To make: Combine all ingredients in a blender and whiz on high until smooth, 30–60 seconds.

To use: Drink! Whatever you don’t consume immediately should be covered and refrigerated.

YIELD: MAKES APPROXIMATELY TWO 1½-CUP
(375 ML) SERVINGS, OR 1 LARGE MEAL

Five Daily Rituals for Beautiful Skin

Skin care shouldn't be a complex chore. It should be simple, natural, and basic. And if a few of these straightforward skin-care rituals are free for the asking, then so much the better! I've outlined five of my favorite simple yet effective treatments below.

1. Institute a cleansing routine. This is a beauty must! Cleanse your skin twice daily (only once if your skin is dry) using a mild, natural, inexpensive cleanser designed for your skin type. Cleansing your skin is especially important before going to bed because your body excretes toxins through your skin as you sleep. If facial pores are clogged with makeup and dirt, breakouts can occur. If you perspire a lot in your line of work or you exercise heavily, rinse off and massage your body with a coarse cloth or loofah before retiring to remove salt and dead-skin buildup. Your skin needs to breathe while you sleep!



2. Get plenty of sleep. Has your get-up-and-go gotten up and gone? Sleep deprivation takes its toll on your face in a hurry. To look and feel your absolute best, you need to get deeply restful, quality sleep. No matter how well you care for your skin, if you are sleep deprived, your skin will look sallow, dull, tired, and saggy, and your puffy eyes will make you look like a frog prince or princess. And, of course, your energy level will be less than desirable. Sleep — it's the best-kept skin-care secret there is!



3. Exercise regularly. Exercises such as walking, biking, in-line skating, and weight lifting improve cardiovascular fitness and muscular endurance, which translate into increased energy and a rosy complexion. Try to exercise outside if possible to help oxygenate your cells with fresh air and facilitate waste removal through your skin. If you live in a city, try to find a green space — a park or greenway—to exercise in. If city streets, with their attendant pollution, are your only outdoor option, exercising in a gym may be a better alternative.

Did You Know?

Sweat is good for the skin. It's almost 99 percent water and contains urea and lactic acid, two terrific natural moisturizers that are common ingredients in most moisturizing creams. So go

ahead and let 'em see you sweat — it'll do your skin a world of good!



4. Soak in some sunlight — but not too much! Ten to 15 minutes of daily unprotected exposure to sunlight is essential to the health of your bones and your skin. It helps your body absorb calcium, due to the skin's ability to convert the sun's rays into vitamin D. Sun exposure helps heal eczema, psoriasis, and acne, and energizes your body. Its warm rays just make you feel good all over.

Always wear a sunscreen with a high SPF if you're going to be exposed for more than 15 minutes at a time, especially between 10:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M., when the sun's rays are strongest. If your dermatologist advises that you avoid the sun entirely, other sources of vitamin D are listed on page 4.

5. Drink lots of water. What goes in must go out. Water helps move everything right along. Eight to twelve 8-ounce glasses of water a day combined with a fibrous diet will help cleanse your body of toxins and keep your colon functioning as it should. Impurities not disposed of in a timely manner via the internal organs of elimination (such as the kidneys, liver, lungs, and large intestine) will find an alternate exit, namely your skin, which is sometimes referred to as the "third kidney." Pimples and rashes may develop as your body tries to unload its wastes through your skin. Water also keeps your skin hydrated and moisturized, so drink up!

Skin-Care Basics

Caring for your skin doesn't have to be a complicated affair. It's quite simple, actually — despite what salespeople behind department store cosmetics counters say. If they had their way, you'd be buying eye cream, lip exfoliating cream, lip gloss, lipstick sealer, throat cream, under-eye circle concealer, antiwrinkle cream, skin-lightening lotion, body sloughing cream, bust-enhancing cream, thigh cream, pore-tightening masks, precleanser, regular cleanser, clarifying lotion, hyperpigmentation spot treatment cream — the list is endless.

I've heard it said . . .

by age 20, you have the skin you inherited;

by age 40, you have the skin you deserve; and

by age 60, you have the skin you've earned!

— from the July 1998 issue of *Smart Skin Care*,
published by the American Institute of Esthetics

Cosmetic companies want to sell you hope in a jar, the hope of fresh, new, wrinkle-free skin and restored youth. Let's face it — it's never going to happen! However, your quest for a vibrant, healthy appearance needn't be terribly expensive or complicated or include a bevy of synthetic chemicals.

The Top 10 Enemies for All Skin Types

1. Smoking. Smoking constricts blood vessels, restricts oxygen uptake, gives a gray color to your complexion, and eats up vitamin C, which is necessary for collagen formation. In addition to increasing your risk for developing cancer, smoking leads to puckering wrinkles around the mouth and fine squinty creases around your eyes.

2. Sunlight. Excessive sun exposure leads to dry, wrinkled, leathery, blotchy, prematurely aged skin and possibly skin cancer.

3. Dry air. If you work in the dry air of a climate-controlled office or live in an arid climate, your skin can easily become parched and thirsty. Keep a hydrating floral water spray handy at all times.

4. Excessive pulling on the skin. Makeup and facial products should be applied using a gentle touch. Use a soft makeup sponge to apply color and a light tapping or stroking motion when applying creams and lotions; otherwise, you could encourage sagging.

5. Weight loss/gain. Your skin, though quite elastic, is not a rubber band. If you stretch anything too many times, it eventually loses its spring. Stretch marks and sagging, untuned skin can be the result of yo-yo dieting. Try to maintain a relatively constant weight.

6. Pollution. Avoid pollution whenever possible. If you live in a dirty, smoggy city and exercise outdoors, do so in the early morning when pollution concentration is at its lowest; otherwise, join a gym. Pollution affects your skin in the same way as smoking, minus the puckering and creasing.

7. Abusive exfoliation/overzealous cleansing. Washcloths and facial scrubs are designed to exfoliate your skin while cleansing. If you scrub your skin in the same manner used to remove the

soap scum from your shower stall, you'll only irritate it and make matters worse, not better.

8. Alcohol. Alcoholic drinks have absolutely no place in a beautiful-skin regimen. Alcohol dehydrates you from the inside out, taxes your liver, and gobbles up your B vitamins.

9. Drugs. Check with your physician regarding the potential side effects of any medication you are taking. Some drugs may cause sun sensitivity, dryness, blotchiness, or even mild acne.

Top Four Cleansing Tips

- **Give it a twice-over.** If you wear foundation, powder, or waterproof face and eye makeup, be sure to cleanse your skin twice. The first cleansing removes the makeup, and the second cleansing removes excess sebum and dead skin and deep-cleans your pores.
- **Rinse, rinse, rinse.** You can never rinse your face and body too much! Cleansing products, massage oil, makeup, and soap can leave a film on your skin that will clog pores.
- **Don't overdo it.** No matter how oily your complexion, limit your cleansing routine to twice a day, to avoid stripping your skin's protective acid mantle.
- **Avoid hot water.** Hot water dehydrates and irritates most skin types. Use tepid or warm water only.

10. Constipation. Toxins can build up within your body if your elimination is faulty, but they must eventually escape via some channel. Frequently the path of choice is your skin, so drink plenty of fresh water and eat lots of fiber to keep your plumbing running smoothly (and your skin looking smooth, too).

Keeping It Simple

As mentioned, nutrition, exercise, sunlight, water consumption, and sleep are all vital to a healthy body and clear skin. These factors affect us internally and result in vibrant and glowing skin fortified from the inside out. However, your skin must be properly cared for externally as well, but this doesn't mean you have to spend hundreds of dollars every year on the latest synthetic technological skin care breakthrough, or even \$60 on a tiny jar of throat-firming cream with encapsulated liposomes that burrow upon your skin at scheduled intervals.

Five products — a cleanser, a toner or astringent, a moisturizer, an exfoliant or antioxidant, and a sunscreen — are all anyone, man or woman, needs to use to maintain healthy skin. Find a moisturizing sunscreen, and the number drops to four. Doesn't get much simpler than that!

- **Cleanser** — to wash away dirt, makeup, toxins, and pollutants
- **Toner or astringent** — to remove any residual cleanser or oil from the skin and to temporarily refine the appearance of large pores
- **Moisturizer** — to replenish and minimize wear and tear
- **Exfoliator or antioxidant** — to refresh and smooth the complexion, such as a gentle facial scrub, alpha- or beta-hydroxy gel or cream, or topical vitamin C
- **Sunscreen** — to protect against the harmful and "age-ifying" effects of the sun

Greeting the First Signs of Aging

Because your skin's production of elastin and collagen begins to slow when you're in your 30s, a lifetime of facial expressions will start showing themselves in features such as frown lines, laugh lines, and crow's-feet, giving your face character. By your late 30s gravity kicks in, and you may notice — depending upon the degree of sun damage — that the skin on your neck has begun to sag. In addition, over the years, the thinning of the epidermis builds up into a constant battle with dry skin.

An Herbal Arsenal for Aging

The following recipes are wonderful treatments for many of the common signs of aging. Obviously, they cannot stop aging — nor would we want them to! Aging is a natural, enlightening part of life's process. Rather than making futile attempts to prevent it, we should enjoy it. These recipes and tips will help to ensure that we enjoy it in the best of health and with a glowing, radiant complexion that should reflect the enthusiasm for life we feel inside.

HONEY-RUB ANTI-CELLULITE BATH TREATMENT

The rosemary and lavender essential oils in this formula pamper and condition your skin, while the juniper and cypress essential oils exert a diuretic action, helping to reduce water retention. The salts aid in toxin elimination and muscle relaxation.



- 2 teaspoons (10 ml) almond, avocado, or sesame oil**
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) honey**
- 1 teaspoon (5 ml) vodka, gin, or rum**
- 2 drops juniper essential oil**
- 3 drops cypress essential oil**
- 4 drops lavender angustifolia essential oil**
- 3 drops rosemary (chemotype linalol) essential oil**
- ½ cup (125 ml) Epsom salts**

To prepare the bath: Blend the oil, honey, alcohol, and essential oils in a small bowl. Set aside. Start the water running in the tub and add the salts; stir them around until they are dissolved. When the tub is full, pour in the oily mixture.

To use: Soak for approximately 20 minutes. Massage the cellulite-affected areas while you are soaking to help break down the fatty deposits. Then get out and briskly dry your skin using a thickly

napped towel. Follow up with an application of body lotion to which you have added a drop of each of the essential oils in the ingredients list. You may partake of this bath up to three times a week.

YIELD: 1 BATH TREATMENT

CARROT AND CALENDULA COMPLEXION CONDITIONER

This penetrating, gentle, skin-nourishing oil can also be used as a facial massage oil for all skin types except for very oily, sunburned, and couperose skin (sensitive skin characterized by dilated capillaries). If done on a regular basis, facial massage will increase circulation and moisture retention, resulting in smooth, glowing skin.

2 tablespoons (30 ml) sesame, almond, hazelnut, or jojoba oil

6 drops carrot seed essential oil

4 drops calendula essential oil

To make: Combine all ingredients in a 1-ounce (30 ml) dark glass bottle. Shake thoroughly to blend. Store in a dry, dark cabinet. For maximum potency, use within 1 year.

To remove makeup: Place a few drops onto the pad of your ring finger and apply to eyelashes or lips. You can rub the oil over your lips to dissolve any lipstick, but don't rub your eyes. Instead, close your eyes for 60 seconds and allow the oil to penetrate the lashes and break down your mascara. Ever so gently, using a moistened cotton pad and sweeping strokes from the outer corner of the eye to the inner corner, remove your makeup.



Use light, circular

For a facial massage: One teaspoon (95 ml) of oil should be sufficient for a 5-minute facial massage before bedtime. Beginning at the base of your throat, use upward and outward strokes, progressing with sliding movements along your jawline to the base of your ears, then circular motions over your cheeks and ears and around your lips. Lightly tap around your eyes with the pads of your fingers, beginning at the outer edge and working inward. Next, beginning at the center of your forehead, use upward strokes to work your way outward with each hand, ending with circular strokes over your temples. Repeat the entire procedure up to five times. There's no need to rinse because the oil should be completely absorbed into your skin.

YIELD: 1 OUNCE (30 ML)



SUNFLOWER FRICTION

One of my favorite body and facial scrubs to use during the winter months, when my skin is especially dry, is a superfatted mixture of raw sunflower kernels and heavy cream. It's high in emollients and is an excellent makeup remover (keep away from eye area). Try this recipe and see if your skin doesn't feel like velvet!

1 tablespoon (15 ml) finely ground raw sunflower kernels

1 tablespoon (15 ml) heavy cream

To make: In a small bowl, combine ingredients until a spreadable paste forms.

To use: Apply scrub to face, neck, and chest, gently massaging in circular motions for about 2 minutes. Rinse in the shower or while leaning over a sink, as it can be a bit messy. If you want to scrub your whole body, triple or quadruple the recipe according to your size. This recipe can be used daily, even on the most sensitive of skins.

YIELD: 1 TREATMENT

BALANCING SCRUB

Excerpted from *The Herbal Body Book*,
by Stephanie Tourles (Storey Books, 1994)

This formula is particularly good for resurfacing and refining dry, flaky skin, diminishing fine lines and wrinkles (with continued use), and evening out skin tone. The natural acids in papaya and yogurt accelerate the removal of the top layer of dead skin cells, revealing fresher, younger-looking skin.

1 tablespoon (15 ml) papaya pulp or plain yogurt

2 teaspoons (10 ml) ground oatmeal

1 teaspoon (5 ml) sea salt

To make: Combine the ingredients.

To use: Massage the mixture onto your face and throat until a rosy glow appears. Leave on for 5 minutes, then rinse with cool water. Use this scrub once or twice every week until your skin begins to become more uniformly colored and has attained a smooth appearance.



A daily soak in warm water mixed with a drop of bath oil can be both physically and emotionally soothing.

YIELD: 1 TREATMENT

DRY-SKIN BATH OILS

Winter, with its cold temperatures and dry air, can be a rough season for most mature skins. Flakiness, increased sensitivity, and chapping can occur. For your daily massage or bath, try one of these penetrating and nourishing bath and body oils to help combat dry skin:

- Avocado
- Hazelnut
- Jojoba
- Almond
- Sesame
- Coconut

Use 1 tablespoon (15 ml) in the bath or 1 to 2 tablespoons (15–30 ml) as a massage oil.

Rejuvenation with Dry-Brushing



Use a natural-fiber brush and an organic oil for dry-brushing; both can be found at most natural foods stores.

To eradicate both the dry skin and the cellulite that become more and more common as you age, I recommend that both men and women adopt a simple yet invigorating morning ritual — dry-brushing — for epidermal stimulation. Dry-brushing revs up the circulation better than your morning cuppa joe — guaranteed.

Dry-brushing is a must for smooth, sleek, clear skin. Over the course of a day, your skin eliminates more than a pound of waste through thousands of tiny sweat glands. In fact, about one-third of all the body's impurities are excreted this way. If your pores are clogged by tight-fitting clothes, aluminum-containing antiperspirants, and mineral-oil-based moisturizers, there's no way for these toxic by-products to escape. Over time, these wastes build up, causing your skin to look pale, pasty, and pimply. The dead skin cells also build up on the epidermis, resulting in a dry, flaky, lizardlike texture that forms an impenetrable barrier. You have to get rid of this dead cell buildup before a moisturizer can do any good! This is where dry-brushing can lend a helping hand.

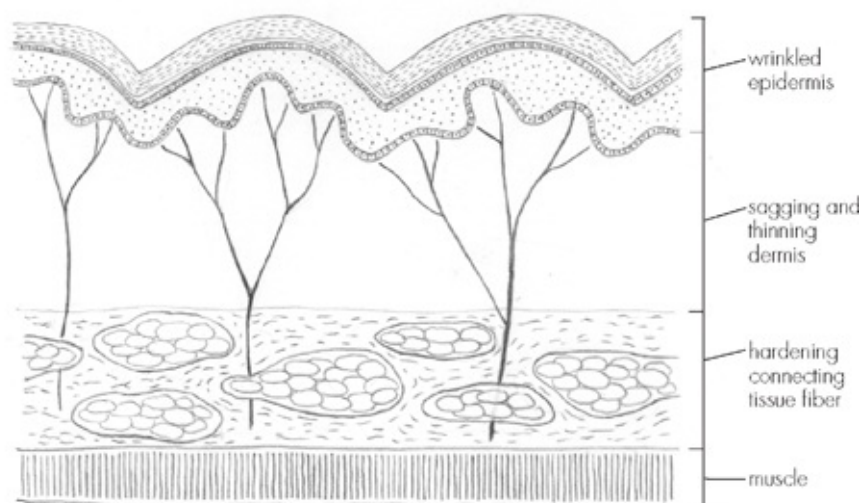
Step 1. Dry-brushing is performed on dry skin — not oiled, not damp, but dry — before you bathe or shower. Using a natural-fiber brush the size of your palm, preferably one with a handle or strap, brush your entire body, except your face (and breasts, if you're a woman), for 5 to 10 minutes. Do not brush hard. Initially, you will have to start very gently and work your way up to more vigorous brushing, but never scrub until you're red. Begin brushing your hands first, then the arms, underarms, neck, chest, stomach, sides, and back. Then brush each leg, beginning with the feet. You'll feel wonderfully invigorated when finished, and your skin will glow!

Step 2. Mix a tablespoon (15 ml) or so of sesame, almond, olive, or avocado oil with a drop or two of lemongrass, German chamomile, or lavender essential oil. Use the scented oil to massage your entire body, including your face, ears, and scalp (if you're washing your hair that day). Do this for about 5 minutes. Next, jump in the shower, bathe as you usually do, and all of the dead skin you just exfoliated is washed away. Pat your skin dry and apply a light moisturizer afterward.

Repeat this ritual daily. It's a good idea to wash your body brush with soap and water every week so to keep it free of skin debris.

Worried about Wrinkles?

The arrival of wrinkles is a natural process resulting from a breakdown of the elastin and collagen fibers present in your skin. "Skin is a composite tissue, consisting of a fibrous matrix containing elastin and collagen. Collagen provides strength to the skin structure and elastin provides the snap or resiliency, allowing the skin to move about and assume conformational changes as required. When the elastin fibers undergo changes that cause them to lose their resiliency or snap, the skin no longer is able to return to its original state. As a result, sagging and crinkling occur in a pattern that is called wrinkles," states Peter T. Pugliese, M.D., author of *Physiology of the Skin* (Allured Publishing, 1996)



When elastin fibers in aging skin lose their resiliency, the dermis "sags" and folds, resulting in wrinkles in the outer skin, or epidermis.

There is a case for keeping wrinkles. They are the long-service stripes earned in the hard campaign of life.

— editorial in the *London Daily Mail*

Furthermore, underlying capillaries become hardened, nerves die, and gravity pulls the epidermis down into the dermal layer. The superficial layer becomes thinner while the lower layers produce fewer and fewer new cells at a slower rate than when you were younger, and the sebaceous glands pump less oil. Result: Your skin doesn't have that youthful glow that it once did.

Life is an ongoing adventure for your skin, a journey of days and nights filled with sun, wind, temperature extremes, late nights, smoke and pollution, stress, and skin-care neglect. Wrinkles aren't

a “problem,” per se, but a natural evolution of life’s toll on your features. Although you can’t prevent wrinkles, you can learn to slow the hands of time and retain your youthful glow for years to come with gentle, natural care and maintenance procedures.

Instant Age: Your Tired Eyes

Want to know a guaranteed way to look older quickly? Neglect your health and stress yourself out. Your eyes reflect the real you — partyer, outdoors person, sun worshiper, workaholic — and are the first part of your complexion to show signs of aging. The very thin skin directly beneath the eyes does not contain sebaceous glands to lubricate it, so a little neglect will immediately be reflected.

Causes of Tired Eyes

Many factors contribute to visual stress and unsightly eyes. A poor diet rich in simple carbohydrates and salt (like snack chips, candy, and fast food) has a tendency to cause fluid retention in the eye area. Stress, lack of sleep, fluorescent light, dim light, sun, alcohol, smoking, dry air, swimming in chlorinated pools, watching television, cosmetic fragrances, allergies, repeated friction (such as eye makeup removal or contact lens placement), and sickness can lead to irritation, eyestrain, dark circles, fine lines, and crow's-feet.

Dark circles trouble many men and women. They make you look sick, tired, and older than your years. Dr. Victor Beraja, a board-certified plastic surgeon and author, states, "Cells beneath the epidermis called melanocytes produce the pigment that forms dark circles . . . when stimulated by a wide range of things, including . . . the gentle pull on the lids to insert contact lenses. . . . When this is repeated on a daily basis, for a long period of time, it can cause hyperpigmentation. Allergies and dry eyes work in a similar way. Irritation caused by these conditions lead a person to rub their eyes, which again can cause hyperpigmentation. If the skin is excessively dry or sensitive to sun, even short exposure to the sun will irritate and stimulate the production of pigment. Of course not all dark circles are caused by hyperpigmentation. Some circles are caused by swelling, poor circulation, and fluid retention."

Applying Eye Treatments

In applying creams, lotions, and eye makeup, it's worth taking a bit of extra care so that you keep the skin around your eyes looking as healthy as possible. Following are the application steps I suggest:

1. Dab the product of choice onto your ring finger.
2. Gently pat the lotion under the eye, starting at the outside and working in.
3. Next pat the lotion on top of the eye, again starting at the outside and working in.

Note: Working in the other direction, from inside to outside, encourages the formation of crow's-feet wrinkles.

— *excerpted from* The Herbal Home Spa,
by Greta Breedlove (Storey Books, 1998)



Dark circles can also be the result of venous circulation, which is partially visible through the extremely thin skin beneath the eyes. Neither bleaching nor herbal treatments will work if this is the cause.

Preventing Tired Eyes

To prevent the unsightly appearance of red, irritated eyes and dark circles, try these tips:

Wear sunscreen. Always wear sunscreen, either by itself or under your makeup — every day! Sunscreen helps prevent melanin formation within the thin, delicate skin around your eyes. Melanin is the dark pigment that can show up as unsightly dark circles.

Treat them gently. Don't pull or rub your eyes. Take off eye makeup gently, using vegetable oil or an eye-makeup remover. Avoid using petroleum jelly or heavy cream near your eyes, as these can block the tear ducts and lead to water retention and puffy eyes.

Moisturize. Apply a water-based lotion or gel around the eye area once every day after cleansing to moisturize the delicate skin.

Take a break. Are you stuck behind a glaring computer screen, or do you sit behind a desk grading papers or crunching numbers, all the while squinting? Give your eyes a break. Hour after hour of looking in one direction at small print and computer screen light leads to eye irritation, tiredness, headache, and lazy eyes. Periodically stand up, stretch, and — ideally looking out a window — focus on something far in the distance. Without turning your head, look side to side several times, then up and down. Now, don't your eyes feel better?

Tune out. Don't be a television addict — the glare from the screen can irritate your eyes.

Sleep. Pep up with plenty of sound sleep — one of the best eye (and body) beautifiers there is!

Treating Tired Eyes

There are many different natural and herbal treatments that are just as effective as over-the-counter bleach treatments for soothing away those dark circles under your eyes, puffiness around your eyelids, and the red, watery conditions caused by prolonged stress to the eyes.

Hydrosol spritzer. Keep a bottle of lavender handy and spritz face and eyes with it as often as necessary. The liquid is so pure and gentle that it can be sprayed directly into opened eyes. German chamomile and rose hydrosol work equally well.

Milk. For swollen eyelids, dip cotton balls or cosmetic squares into icy cold whole milk. Lie down, apply soaked cotton to swollen eyelids, and leave on for 5 to 10 minutes. The high fat content of whole milk provides a moisturizing treatment for the delicate, thin skin around your eyes.

Tea. To reduce puffiness around the eyes, brew some black or green tea in tea bags. These teas contain tannin, a natural astringent that helps to reduce swelling and puffiness. Chill the tea bags. Lie down with your head slightly elevated above your body and apply tea bags to your eyes. Rest with tea bags over closed eyes for approximately 20 minutes.

Herbal compresses. Make your own herbal compress with calendula or lavender using the Soothing Eye Compress recipe (below).

Fluid intake. Swollen eyes and dark circles can sometimes be the result of toxin buildup in the body as well as dehydration. ~~Be sure to drink plenty of water daily to flush toxins and excess sodium from your body.~~ When the body is dehydrated, the kidneys try to retain water, which results in puffiness and general ill health. The more water you drink, the less you will retain — it's a fact!

SOOTHING EYE COMPRESS

This cool, refreshing treatment will help soothe tired, irritated eyes.

2 cups (500 ml) water

4 teaspoons (20 ml) freshly picked calendula flower petals or lavender buds (or 2 teaspoons [10 ml] dried)

Cosmetic cotton squares or large cotton balls

To make: Bring the water to a boil. Remove from heat, add the flowers, and cover. Steep for 15 minutes. Then place in the refrigerator and allow to cool for 1 hour before straining. Keep refrigerated and use within 4 days.

To use: Moisten four cotton squares or balls with the herbal tea, squeezing out any excess liquid. Lie down and place the cotton over your eyes — two pieces for each eye. Leave on for 5–10 minutes.

YIELD: 6–8 TREATMENTS

Nature's Giveaway: Age Spots

“Out, out, damned spot.” If only all it took were three magic words for those pesky skin discolorations to disappear. You know what I’m talking about: those flat, roundish brown or reddish brown spots that, as you grow older, frequently develop on hands, arms, face, shoulders, feet, and legs. Technically known as hyperpigmentation, they’re also called liver spots.

Causes of Age Spots

Epidermal hyperpigmentation is the result of excess pigmentation, or melanin accumulation, in the dermal layer. Age, sun exposure, pregnancy, birth control pills, injury, acne scars, and heredity all play a role.

Age or liver spots are caused by accumulated sun damage and may begin to appear in your 30s, depending on the extent of past sun exposure. These discolorations often don’t respond to commercial fade creams but can be removed by your dermatologist if they really bother you. Freckles are usually hereditary and often darken with sun exposure, but they tend to fade if you stay out of the sun. The skin on pressure points — elbows, knees, knuckles, palms — also tend to darken because of friction and sunlight.

Preventing Age Spots

To prevent age spots from occurring and freckles from multiplying and darkening, stay out of the sun. The more you worship the sun, the more lovely brown spots your skin will probably sport. If your knees and elbows tend to darken easily, avoid leaning on them as much as possible.

Treating Age Spots

Twice a week use an unripened green papaya enzyme mask to soften and exfoliate. (It’s gentle enough to use around the eyes, too.) Two or three times a week, before bed, apply a mild glycolic acid to just cleansed skin, then follow with a light moisturizer if necessary. Both can be purchased from most natural products suppliers. Use this combination wherever your skin needs to be lightened and the texture refined. And always use sunscreen to prevent damaging and darkening newly exfoliated skin.

LEMON CREAM SKIN LIGHTENER

Lemon juice acts as an alpha-hydroxy acid and bleach, potato acts as an enzyme, cucumber acts as a cooling agent, and yogurt contains lactic acid and also acts as a bleach.

- 2 tablespoons (30 ml) fresh lemon juice**
- 1 small potato, peeled**
- ½ small cucumber**
- 1 tablespoon (15 ml) plain, organic, raw yogurt (if raw is unavailable, then make sure it is minimally processed with no fillers and contains live cultures)**



To make: Using a blender or small food processor, blend all ingredients until a smooth, spreadable paste is formed. Press mixture through a strainer if consistency is a bit lumpy. If the mixture is stored in a tightly covered container, it will keep in the refrigerator for 24 hours.

To use: Pull your hair up off your face and neck. Lie down with a towel under your head and neck to catch drips — this recipe can get a bit messy. Apply puree to face, neck, and chest, and cover with a hot, damp towel. For ease of breathing, you may want to use two hot towels, one draped from the tip of your nose up over your forehead, the other from your upper lip down over your neck and chest. Leave the skin lightener on for 15–20 minutes. Rinse, and follow with moisturizer if necessary. May be used twice weekly.



During the treatment, if your skin tingles a little, that's all right, but if it really begins to sting, rinse off the puree immediately and apply aloe vera gel, lavender hydrosol spray, chilled German chamomile tea, or plenty of cool water.

Caution: Do not use on inflamed, sunburned, or sensitive skin.

YIELD: 1–2 TREATMENTS

Skin Challenges to Expect as You Grow Older

About face . . . forward march — gracefully! What skin challenges or changes can you expect as you age, and what can you do about them?

From the moment we're born, the genetic clock starts ticking and doesn't stop until we die. Aging is inevitable. However, many of the signs of "aging" are self-inflicted due to neglect or excessive exposure to environmental factors such as sun, wind, cold, heat, and pollution. Poor dental health, sagging, wrinkled skin, hyperpigmentation, bad posture, obesity, flabby muscles, and a dry, dull, lifeless complexion are signs of deterioration that you can control to a large degree.

Choose to accept the aging process with dignity and grace — but retain and maintain youthfulness as long as you can. Instead of fighting this natural process every step of the way and cursing skin changes, educate yourself and learn that through diet, exercise, stress relief, and regular skin-care procedures, you can look forward to a lifetime of radiant skin.

Gentle Treatments for a Lifelong Healthy Complexion

As you grow older, you may still be plagued with T-zone oiliness, acne, and blemishes if you experienced these afflictions during your teenage years, but don't continue to treat these problems with the same harsh products you probably used in years past. Kinder, gentler products are more beneficial now and won't leave the surface of your skin dehydrated. To foster a lifetime of healthy, supple skin and combat signs of aging, you need to lay a good foundation for the years ahead. So use gentle, nonabrasive products formulated for your skin type — they'll foster an enduring, healthful, glowing appearance.

Chronological Aging versus Photoaging

"Time changes things." An old adage, but one that rings true. There are two types of aging: chronological aging and photoaging, or environmental aging. Chronological aging of the skin occurs from preprogrammed genetic factors, and there is nothing you can do about it. Your skin, its particular characteristics, and any associated aging idiosyncrasies are an inherited gift from your mother and father. However, most visible signs of aging, from age spots to wrinkles to a leathery texture, are not the result of the years you've lived but rather a result of photoaging — years of unprotected, chronic sun exposure superimposed on the chronological aging process. Other environmental factors and lifestyle habits contribute to this process as well.

In actuality, depending on the genes you were dealt, your state of health, and the level of care given to your skin, your skin at age 35 can be of almost the same quality at age 50. You can, in all reality, maintain that youthful glow well beyond the average time limit. Or the reverse can occur. An overstressed, out-of-shape, unhealthy man or woman of 35 can look older than a 50-year-old who takes care of him- or herself.

Beauty comprises your personality, your poise, and your smile — including those laugh lines! You alone are responsible for your inner glow and outer radiance and should embrace your advancing years. You can choose to age naturally and gracefully, welcoming your skin's changes, or you can

neglect yourself, do nothing, and age prematurely. Remember, it's not the passing of the years that ages you, but how you care or fail to care for yourself. No one knows when his or her first line or next wrinkle will appear, but you should become aware of how to deal with the skin challenges ahead and be armed with knowledge to combat or soften the signs of aging.

Your Youthful Twenties

Ah, your 20s. Your skin is in its prime — beautiful, glowing radiance that's evenly toned and smooth. Skin at this age is strong and resilient, with good elasticity and a firm, smooth appearance. The late 20s may present signs of early dryness and the beginning signs of sun damage if you roasted yourself as a child.

Treat these problems accordingly.

Even at this relatively young age, you must think ahead to examine the effects that your current habits will have on your skin in the years to come. There are some simple, basic approaches to healthy skin that you can take now to ensure that the years ahead continue to be faced with a healthy, radiant complexion.

Did You Know?

By the age of 20, most people have approximately 70 percent of the sun damage they will ever have.

- Use sun protection daily with an SPF of at least 15.
- Wash gently — avoid overzealous scrubbing and harsh cleansers.
- Cleanse thoroughly. Rinse, rinse, and rinse to remove excess cleanser and debris that could clog pores.
- At all times use a mild moisturizer (or a sunscreen/moisturizer combination) formulated for your skin type to keep skin hydrated and prevent premature crinkling around the lips and eyes.
- Choose makeup and skin-care products labeled “noncomedogenic,” which means that they won't clog pores.
- Wash makeup applicators approximately once a week, and keep them clean.
- Quit smoking and drinking alcohol and caffeinated drinks. These remove nutrients and moisture from the body.
- Keep your stress under control.

The Changeable Thirties

Here begins the decade where your past skin sins will come back to haunt you and your skin reflects accumulated environmental damage. Your days of fun in the sun will become visible as fine lines and creases materialize around your eyes and lips and age spots begin to emerge. Oil production decreases as you age, which can be a boon for those with oily skin but a curse for those with normal-to-dry skin. If you have fair skin, hair, and eyes and normal-to-dry skin when you enter your 30s, you are likely to age much more rapidly than your darker, oilier-skinned friends.

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