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The Ultimate Guide to Better Skin, Based on Your Age

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Because the world of skin care can be nothing short of daunting, we've broken it down for you. Here, how to properly care for your skin—both at home and in your doctor's office—based on your age.

In Your 20s

Skin Care

During your 20s, the most common skin concerns are typically acne and preventive anti-aging. So, it's generally recommended to cleanse twice daily and focus on keeping the skin hydrated. "Make sure to moisturize your skin to maintain a healthy skin barrier because dry skin ages more quickly and is more susceptible to inflammation," says San Antonio dermatologist Vivian Bucay, MD.

Acne can be worse in your twenties than ever. If acne is a battle you're facing, talk to your dermatologist about getting it under control (they'll likely recommend an oral medication and a retinoid if it's hormonal). Another great option to wrangle blemish-prone skin at home? Products containing salicylic acid or tea tree oil—we love Dr. Barbara Sturm Clarifying Spot Treatment (\$54) and IMAGE Skincare Clear Cell Restoring Serum (\$41)—to dry up acne without compromising the health of your skin.



Nothing safeguards your skin from the damaging effects of the sun like sunscreen. "Sunscreen needs to be used by women of all ages," says Washington, D.C. dermatologist Tina Alster, MD. "Get in the habit of wearing it now so that it becomes second nature to put it on every day." However, not all

sunscreens are the same, and what you use on your body may not be the best option for your face and vice versa (the skin is different in each area). Make sure to choose an SPF of at least 30 or higher that has physical blockers, as opposed to chemical ingredients, which are less irritating to skin. And, wear it every single day, even in the winter.

Treatments

In-office chemical peels and facials can go a long way on the road to preventive aging. Visiting a board-certified doctor will ensure you're getting the best treatment for your specific skin type, whether it be a peel, extractions, LED light therapy or oxygen therapy—to name a few.

Diet and Supplements

In the war against acne, nutrition is everything. “You need tons of greens to help oxygenate your skin, fight bacteria and keep it clean. You will have never-ending breakouts if you don’t eat well,” says celebrity aesthetician Joanna Vargas. “My favorite supplements for this age group target healthy hair and nails,” says Alex Caspero, registered dietitian and nutrition expert for HUM Nutrition. “Biotin strengthens both hair and nails, while GLA (gamma-linolenic acid) in the form of black currant oil or evening primrose oil, is an essential fatty acid that promotes healthy growth of skin, hair and nails, as well.”

In Your 30s

Skin Care

“Two tips for someone in the 30s and 40s—and through their entire lives—is to use retinol every day,” says Charleston, SC dermatologist Marguerite Germain, MD. The all-star ingredient increases collagen, revs up the rate at which skin sheds, and gives skin a brighter, more healthy look. “Some people think they should stop in the summertime because they think retinol causes increased sun sensitivity, but they need to use it all year round in order to get the benefits.”

If you haven’t gotten in the habit of using SPF daily, your thirties are the time to do so. “Number one, protect your skin from the sun—use sunscreen, UPF clothing, hats and lip balm with SPF,” says Prospect, KY dermatologist Tami Cassis, MD. While SPF is important and can’t be glossed over, Dr. Alster says it’s not enough by itself. “You need to use sunscreen, but you can’t rely solely on it. That’s why it’s important to apply an antioxidant daily. It scavenges toxic free radicals that build up in skin from cumulative sun exposure and provides added protection.” You don’t need a handful of different types of antioxidants on your skin to reap the benefits. Pick one with a formulation that you like that suits your skin. A vitamin C or E base is pretty neutral and most younger skin types can tolerate it. Our favorite: SkinCeuticals C E Ferulic (\$166).



Treatments

“Neurotoxins should be part of the equation at this stage. And, you might need just a little filler to maintain the volume under the eyes and in the nasolabial folds,” says Dr. Cassis. Botox, Dysport or Xeomin can be injected preventatively to stop lines and wrinkles from occurring.

Diet and Supplements

“The foods you eat are very important to your skin health,” says Dr. Germain. “Adopting an anti-inflammatory diet in which sugar, white flour and dairy products are decreased improves the skin.” Caspero explains that due to sun exposure, pollution, stress, and loss of subcutaneous support (among other factors), wrinkles are, unfortunately, a natural part of aging. “In addition to forming wrinkles, skin also becomes rough and dry, leading to redness, adult breakouts and patches. To combat this, make sure you are supplementing/eating enough quality fats in your diet, especially omega-3 fatty acids. I recommend a quality fish oil for women in their 30s.”

In Your 40s

Skin Care

“Development of hyperpigmentation is one of the first signs of early aging and the accumulation of 40-some odd years of UV exposure,” says New York plastic

surgeon, Dara Liotta, MD. In order to combat unsightly sunspots, invest in a brightening product like the Dr. Dennis Gross Clinical Grade Resurfacing Liquid Peel (\$95) to fade pigmentation fast. Another spot-blasting product to keep in your toolbox? Antioxidants, an ingredient Harrison, NY dermatologist Jennifer Silveran Kitchin, MD says are a must for anyone over 40. She recommends Replere (\$37–\$124), citing that it's free of preservatives, dyes and perfumes but still reverses the signs of photoaging. Brookline, MA dermatologist Papri Sarkar says sunscreen helps to prevent aging like brown spots, melasma, wrinkles, freckles, etc. and prevents skin cancer (and skin cancer scars!). Santa Barbara, CA dermatologist Tammy Berry, MD says to look for high levels of zinc and titanium for best prevention.



“Estrogen maintains skin moisture by increasing hyaluronic acid in the skin and possibly maintaining barrier function,” explains Dr. Liotta. So when estrogen levels drop during menopause, so does hyaluronic acid levels, giving your skin a much more weathered appearance. To combat this, keep a product like L’Oréal Paris Derm Intensives 1.5% Pure Hyaluronic Acid Serum (\$30) nearby to restore depleted levels of the hydrating ingredient. Dr. Liotta contends this drop in hyaluronic acid also makes skin more prone to showing fine lines and crepey skin, “particularly around the eyes.” Using a retinol product like the Estée Lauder Advanced Night Recovery Eye Supercharged Complex (\$62) to keep the eye area firm.



“I would venture to say that the most forgotten about area in women age 40 and over is the neck and décollete,” says Anaheim, CA dermatologist Kimberly Jerdan, MD. “If not cared for like the face, the neck can often age faster, especially for the more common ‘tech neck’ these days.” Her recommendation? A good neck-firming cream such as Alastin Restorative Neck Complex (\$110), a supercharged formula that Bannockburn, IL dermatologist Heather Downes, MD also stands behind.



Treatments

"I think in your 40s, it's about aging gracefully with a little help from your board-certified dermatologist," says Washington D.C. dermatologist Agnes Ju Chang, MD. Her favorite in-office treatment for skin over 40? PRP rejuvenation. "It increases your natural collagen which helps firm the skin, fine lines, and sun damage. It has been a game changer for my patients in their 40s that desire a long-term investment into their skin health."

Diet and Supplements

Casero explains that collagen is the protein that gives skin strength and elasticity, and, because it naturally declines as we age, she recommends a collagen supplement to keep skin youthful and vibrant. "After using collagen for 12 weeks, you should expect to see a significant reduction in lines, wrinkles and skin dryness."

In Your 50s

Skin Care

"In your 50s, make sure your skin is well hydrated—just because your body is well hydrated, does not mean your skin is," Dr. Germain says. "Good moisturizers with antioxidants and hyaluronic acid need to be applied twice a day." But that's not all. Dr. Germain also says that anyone over 50 should also

be incorporating a glycolic acid wash into their routines—we like Mario Badescu Glycolic Foaming Cleanser (\$16)—because it improves cell turnover without drying the surface out. “This does away with the dullness that can occur with aging skin, making the skin appear brighter and more youthful,” she adds.



A nonnegotiable in any skin routine, especially for skin over 50 is retinol. “Vitamin A derivatives are incredible for skin,” says New York dermatologist Dendy Engelman, MD, adding that they help reverse sun damage, fight lines and wrinkles, improve skin tone and texture and build collagen. “The most beautiful skin I treat in my practice belongs to those who have been using a retinol/retinoid religiously.” A-list options to try: Skinbetter Science AlphaRet (\$120) and SENTE Dermal Contour Pressed Serum with SuGag Technology, a high-tech product Fort Lauderdale, FL dermatologist Dr. Matthew J. Elias says restores contour, volume and elasticity to the skin.



Treatments

If lines and wrinkles are deeply etched around your mouth (usually from smoking), microneedling can break apart the lines. Injectables and fillers, in addition to neurotoxins like Botox, Dysport and Xeomin, are helpful, too, because they work to restore lost volume. The combination of a neurotoxin with a filler works better than either one alone. If your neck and jawline is beginning to sag, Dr. Downes names Ultherapy as the workhorse perfect for the job.

Diet and Supplements

For this age group, Caspero recommends an antioxidant-based supplement, especially one that contains turmeric. "Curcumin, turmeric's active ingredient, can help prevent arthritis and bone loss in older women," she explains, adding that with its concentration of antioxidants that defend against skin-damaging free radicals, it is the perfect supplement for women 50 and older. "I love HUM's Turn Back Time supplement (\$40) that combines both turmeric, ALA and vitamin C."



In Your 60s

Skin Care

For skin over 60, place an emphasis on ingredients that work to slow the signs of aging like retinol, antioxidants, acids and peptides. “Peptides stimulate collagen production and help restore a healthy, youthful structure to the skin,” says Manhattan Beach, CA, dermatologist Ashley Magovern, MD. Any potent peptide product will work—we’re partial to Peter Thomas Roth Peptide 21 Wrinkle Resist Serum (\$110)—however, get picky when it comes to retinol. Instead of using a higher percentage, opt for one that boasts .25 or .5 of the powerful ingredient. (Because skin thins as we age, it’s more able to absorb ingredients and potentially irritate skin.) We like SkinMedica Age Defense Retinol Complex .25 (\$62) or SkinCeuticals .5 Retinol (\$76).



Skin will likely need some help shedding dead skin cells that may leave your complexion looking dull, dry and older at this stage, so cleansing with a glycolic-spiked product continues to be a good idea. A rich moisturizer should also be in rotation in order to lock in hydration (and plumped-up lines). Some of our favorites include NeoCutis Bio-Restorative Skin Cream (\$160) and SkinMedica HA5 Rejuvenating Hydrator (\$178).



Treatments

"Fractionated CO2 Laser Skin Resurfacing gives my patients the biggest bang for their buck," says Huntington Beach, CA dermatologist, David Rayhan MD. "It gives my patients the biggest bang for their buck. If they're willing to tolerate a little downtime this literally erases wrinkles." An option East Greenwich, RI dermatologist Caroline Chang, MD recommends for matura skin looking for a list? Eurothreads. "When placed superficially, the act as a support system for thin or sagging skin while promoting collagen production. The threads also can improve redness and brown spots. In addition, threads can be placed anywhere on the face, neck, or chest. In combination with deep threads, which lift without adding volume, it can make a huge difference."

Diet and Supplements

In addition to potent anti-aging supplements, Caspero also recommends both a Vitamin D and B12 vitamin for anyone over age 50 or 60. While we don't often think of these as beauty vitamins, Caspero says they can help with normal metabolism and skin function. "As we age, we lose the ability to absorb nutrition in the same capacity as we did when we were younger," she explains, adding that this is especially true for those over 50 who may not be able to absorb enough B12 from food. "Vitamin D deficiency also becomes more common, thanks to a lack of exposure and reduced absorption. In addition to B12 and vitamin D, a more potent anti-aging supplement is helpful."

