

17 Skin Care Habits To Have By The Time You're 21

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The years before the age of 21 can be a blast. Amid being a student or having your first "real job," you're probably finding your feet and testing the waters of adult life. But, there are some important skin care habits to get into by the time you're 21, that you won't want to dismiss. The late nights spent studying, working shifts, or partying way too hard, plus a diet of junk food and that one balanced meal you learned to cook, can really wreak havoc on your skin. Sure, your complexion may be glowing and have the bloom of youth now, but in another five to ten years, your neglect may start to show. Think of your skin like a brand new car: If you look after it from day one, unless you're very unlucky, it's sure to look and function great for many years. On the other hand, if you put the pedal to the metal too often, let dirt build up, and forget to change your oil, this won't bode well for you.

So if you're currently under 21, now might be the time to put some skin care habits into place, to get your skin in tip-top condition, and help create a solid routine for years to come. I spoke to a bunch of experts to discover what skin care habits they recommend folks should adopt before the age of 21.

1. Start Early On In Your Teens

Heather Wilson, InstaNatural's Director of Brand Development and licensed esthetician, tells me over email, "It is recommended to start good skin care habits early, especially to prevent skin challenges that can often occur in later teen years. Skin care shouldn't be complicated or time consuming and products should be very gentle." Don't worry if you're in your late teens already, just make sure to start carving out good habits now.

2. Gentle Exfoliation Every Day

Dr. Michael Swann, board certified dermatologist, advocates gentle exfoliation every day. Speaking over email, Dr. Swann tells me, “There are lots of ways to do this (acidic cleansers, glycolic acid moisturizers, Clarisonic, loofah) but the key is to do it regularly and not to be too irritating.”

Dr. Jennifer MacGregor, dermatologist at Union Square Dermatology, also promotes regular exfoliation. Dr. MacGregor says, “My favorite methods are non-abrasive gentle cleansers. If you are acne prone, use cleaners containing alpha and beta hydroxy acids.”

3. Follow The 3 Steps

Stalina Glot, an Esthetician at Haven Spa NYC says, “Every teen should follow 3 steps of skin care: Cleansing, toning, and moisturizing. “ To start, Glot says, “They must wash the[ir] face once at night with a proper cleanser without presence of soap, the rest of the day (morning or after gym) wipe skin with tonic or lotion without presence of alcohol.”

Glot tells me over email about the importance of ensuring that the water you wash your face with is the correct temperature, “Do not wash the face with water that’s too hot or too cold. Hot water makes the pores expand and enhances sebaceous excretions. Cold water constricts blood vessels and leads to a lack of supply to the skin.” When it comes to the final step, “The entire face must be moistur[iz]ed with hydrating cream only.” Glot explains.

Min Min Ma, a Honey Artists Makeup Artist, tells me over email, “If you want to shy away from skin congestions (blackheads, whiteheads, and pimples) wash your face twice a day followed by toner and moisturizer.”

4. Keep Your Skin Clean

This may sound like a no-brainer, but it can be easy for life to get in the way of your skin care routine, so don’t let it slip! Hanna Naranjo, an Esthetician at Haven Spa NYC says, “Wash your skin in the AM and PM with a gentle cleanser.” When it comes to workouts, Naranjo says, “Rinse your skin immediately after exercising, all of that salty sweat is toxic waste that can cause breakouts.”

5. Utilize Sun Protection As A Way Of Life

“I love the sun as much as anyone, but being smart about your exposure to UV radiation when

you are young will pay huge benefits as you age." Says Dr. Swann. "Finding an excellent sunscreen with long lasting broad spectrum protection that you love to wear is absolutely the smartest habit you can get into. We have all been surprised by a little too much sun exposure on a cloudy or late fall sunny day, but your surprise won't lead to damage if you are protecting your skin every day."

On the same topic, Dr. Debbie Palmer, Board Certified Dermatologist and Founder of Replere®, tells me over email, "Use your daily sunscreen — and don't forget to reapply every 2 hours when out in the sun. The damage to the skin from ultraviolet rays are cumulative. Protect against both skin cancer and aging with sunscreen use."

6. Use Skin Products That Suit Your Skin Type

Dr. MacGregor says, "You also need to get skin products suited to your skin type." If you suffer with acne, Dr. MacGregor explains, "Many of the most effective topicals for acne like Aczone Gel 7.5% and RetinA are available by prescription only." So ask your doctor for their expert advice before you dive into the world of acne treatments.

7. Remove Your Makeup

Deep Clean & Clarify Face Wash, \$38, replere.com

"Wash your face and remove all makeup, skin oil, and dirt at night." Dr. Palmer, instructs. "Cosmetics can trap skin-aging free radicals from smoke or pollution against your skin — causing premature fine-lines, wrinkles, and sagging. My favorite is Replere® Deep Clean & Clarify Face Wash."

8. Give Your Skin The Moisture It Needs

"Know your skin type (oily/dry/combo, sensitive/resistant, red/brown, etc.) and appropriately moisturize your skin." Says Dr. Swann. In addition to this, he explains, "Moisturizers may need to be changed with seasons (heavier in fall/winter) and with age (heavier as you age) and night creams can be heavier than day lotions."

9. Be Consistent

Dr. MacGregor instructs to, "Be consistent — most topical products take 6-12 weeks to work. For anti-aging products like vitamin C and retinol you must be consistent and patient. If you

have acne, it takes weeks for products to start working." She explains, "Prevention is key! Use a good skin care regimen individually tailored by a dermatologist."

Min Min Ma puts emphasis on consistent skin cleansing before bed saying, "Don't skip out on this step as the skin will get clogged up with day to day environmental pollution, makeup products, natural skin oil, and such."

10. Get A Full Body Skin Exam

"See a dermatologist — you HAVE TO get a full body skin exam! Do this immediately to check your moles and marks if you haven't already." Says MacGregor.

11. Perform Monthly Checks On Your Own Skin

"Once a month, stand in front of a full length mirror with a handheld mirror in your hand after a shower and examine your skin. You will become an expert on your skin if you look at it regularly. Look for anything suspicious and educate yourself on any concerns." Says Dr. Swann. "As a side note, I have found this has the added benefit of helping you stay motivated at the gym."

12. Don't Squeeze Pimples

You've probably heard it time and time again, but Glot stresses the importance of leaving pimples alone, "Do not squeeze pimples, it'll cause an infection to spread." She explains, "Use cream for acne only on top of each pimple, because it dries the skin and it will lead to premature aging."

Naranjo adds, "Don't pick at your face, you can damage your skin," which, she explains, can cause scarring and hyperpigmentation.

13. Be Kind To Your Skin Especially If It's Acne Prone

Charcoal Mask, \$17.97, instanatural.com

Wilson tells me, "It is not uncommon for teens to suffer from breakouts and blemishes, as excess oil tends to clog pores and hormones can cause acne. However, going full force with acne treatments can cause dryness or irritation to young skin types." Instead, she says, "Start by incorporating an acne cleanser into your regimen and stick with your gentle, lightweight

moisturizer. In addition, consider adding a weekly mask or exfoliation treatment to help detoxify pores and support healthy cell turnover. The combination of gentle acne-fighting ingredients, healthy hydration, and weekly exfoliation will keep skin healthy and blemish free." Her favorite products are InstaNatural's Acne Cleanser and InstaNatural's Charcoal Mask.

14. Wear As Little Skin Makeup As Possible

"Try to wear as little skin makeup as possible." Says Min Min Ma. "Generally speaking, our skin looks at its best around that age so enjoy it! Don't cover it with tons of foundation and face powder. Let the skin breathe and glow."

15. Protect Your Eyes

Renew & Firm Eye Serum, \$98, replere.com

Dr. Palmer says, "Protect your eyes with antioxidants and sunglasses. I recommend daily use of topical antioxidants to moisturize and protect the delicate skin around the eyes." Her favorite product for this purpose is Replere® Renew & Firm Eye Serum.

16. Lead A Healthy Lifestyle

"Live a healthy life — minimize stress, get enough sleep, never ever smoke, use SPF daily, get regular exercise, and follow a healthy nutritious diet." Says Dr. MacGregor. "This will work wonders for your skin and prevent premature aging."

17. Begin To Think About Aging

Age-Defying Eye Cream, \$19.97, instanatural.com

"While it is true you shouldn't start aggressive anti-aging treatments too early; it is recommended to keep aging in mind as you enter your early twenties. As we enter our mid-twenties, our cell renewal rates begin to decline and skin can start to look less radiant and youthful." Wilson explains. "You can prevent these changes by incorporating a serum and eye cream into your routine in your early twenties. Serums are one of the most powerful skin care products because they are designed to be more concentrated and absorb deeper into the skin. In addition, the eyes are typically the first area to show puffiness and signs of aging, so incorporating an eye product early will prevent future aging concerns." Her favorite products are InstaNatural's Vitamin C Serum and InstaNatural's Age-Defying Eye Cream.

Don't worry if you've not got your skin care routine down to a T just yet — it's likely that even folks over 21 will benefit from these healthy skin care habits!

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