



Skin DEEP

The experts at *Skinfluencer* explain why you should invest in your skin

By EVE HERBERT

Often the skin is an outward reflection of the state of your health, both physically and psychologically. The skin's health, if compromised, can negatively affect your appearance and therefore your self-confidence. For this reason, whatever your age, it is worth investing in your skin. The good news is that it is never too late. According to experts such as Dr Tanja Phillips, Aesthetics and Laser expert at Skinfluencer, our lifestyle choices are often more impactful than our genes. "Your skin is influenced by extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Intrinsic factors are generally something you cannot change as it is your genetic make-up, but extrinsic factors can absolutely be modified."

Dr Phillips says one common lifestyle factor is prolonged exposure to UV radiation

(UVR), and this can compromise the skin health enormously, leading to issues such as pigmentation and skin cancer, so she advocates protection to all her patients. "Using a broad-spectrum sunscreen is the single most helpful thing anyone can do to improve their skin health."

Dr Unnati Desai, a Skinfluencer aesthetics expert who has undertaken extensive postgraduate training in aesthetics procedures and dermatology agrees, "Melanocytes are the pigment cells found in the bottom later of the epidermis. Excess exposure to UVR can disrupt their function resulting in thread veins, loss of skin elasticity and tone, uneven pigmentation such as sunspots, age spots, freckles and rough texture to the skin from the build-up of dead skin cells."

The lower level of the skin, the dermis, is rich in collagen, elastin and a good network of blood vessels that are needed for the plumpness, firmness, elasticity and strength of the skin, which Dr Unnati says can be adversely influenced by poor lifestyle choices. "Smoking, UVR and excess sugar intake can impact the production of new collagen and accelerate the ageing of the collagen network and elastin fibres."

Unfortunately, as we age our skin changes dramatically, becoming thinner and rougher which can make it adopt unhealthy hallmarks including dullness, dryness, visible blood cells and larger pores. "From our mid-20s we start to lose collagen at an average of 1% per year and the amount of hyaluronic acid and fat also reduces," explains Dr Phillips. "This leads to thinner skin and thinner blood vessel walls,

causing facial redness and the appearance of wrinkles and other signs of ageing."

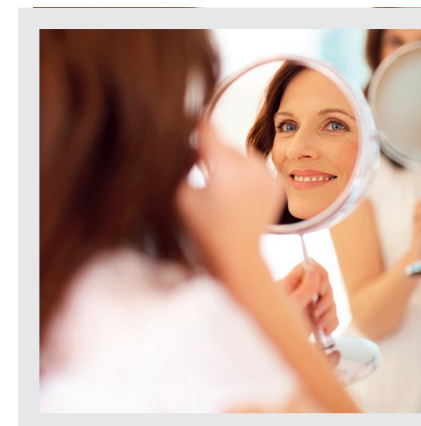
Of course, these alterations can be somewhat mitigated by following simple steps, says Dr Phillips. "Stay out of strong sunlight, drink plenty of water, reduce alcohol intake and think about nourishing your skin from the inside out by taking supplements. A good skincare routine, which includes treatments and products that have been professionally recommended, is also a must."

As one of the world's leading aesthetics laser experts, Dr Phillips wholeheartedly endorses lasers and believes they allow the skin to improve without the need for medications or injectables, enabling the body's largest organ to function in the best way it can. In fact, many of her patients claim lasers are like a "magic wand" when in her hands. "Lasers are unique in

"Using sunscreen is the most helpful thing you can do to improve skin"

their approach and there are numerous patented treatments available that have an incredible effect on various complaints including wrinkles, acne, rosacea, without any downtime for patients," she says.

Of course, any in-clinic treatment results need to be maintained at home and this is where the power of a good



skincare regime comes into play, says Peter Roberts from Skinmed, a UK-based company that offers treatment protocols for a variety of skin conditions, including acne, rosacea and anti-ageing. "Medical grade products known as cytoceuticals, which are only available from a medical clinic, can really improve and optimise the activity and function of all skin cells."

This genre of products, which includes results-driven brands such as ZO Skin and Tebiskin, differ from over-the-counter products because they contain a higher percentage of the active ingredients, as well as unique patented ingredients that you do not see in their high street cosmetic-based rivals. "The active ingredients last longer as they have been stabilised or microencapsulated to avoid degeneration. They can penetrate the waterproof epidermis rather than sitting on the surface of the skin," explains Roberts. "The products have been proven in clinical studies to effect real skin changes and are fully licensed for the treatment of medical conditions. These are not cosmetics."

With a multitude of products available, how can you decipher between what you should have in your arsenal and what is purely optional? "A medicated face wash is a must, and many will contain a chemical exfoliator that removes the dead skin cells from the surface of the skin. This also helps to reduce pore size and improve uneven tone and fine lines," says Roberts. "I would also recommend a Vitamin C-based product and a face cream that is skin-specific, but which contains UV protection."

When it comes to moisturisers, Roberts advises the use of ceramides, which are one of the skin's natural hydrating factors and improves the waterproof barrier function of the epidermis. "Ceramides can emolliate the skin and improve the symptoms of so many dry skin conditions including eczema and psoriasis, leaving your skin looking and feeling its healthiest."





DR TANJA PHILLIPS

Skinfluencer's resident aesthetic doctor and laser expert shares the skincare ingredients needed for optimum skin health

ALPHA HYDROXY ACIDS (AHAs)

There are many types of AHAs but one of the most commonly used in skin care is glycolic acid; it is incredibly beneficial to the skin. The top layer of the skin is called the epidermis and it is constantly producing skin cells which gradually work their way up to the uppermost external surface of the skin. By the time these cells have got there they have experienced some damage. Glycolic acid works as a chemical exfoliator to allow the gentle elimination of these dead skin cells, revealing the healthy skin cells that lie beneath and leaving brighter fresher skin with a more even skin tone and reduced pigmentation.

VITAMIN C

On a daily basis our skin gets damaged by numerous environmental factors including UVA/B, blue light and pollution, which makes the skin produce free radicals, causing oxidative stress and ultimately accelerating the ageing process. In such cases, Vitamin C can come to the rescue, stabilising the skin and therefore prevents accelerated ageing - genius! Vitamin C is very unstable and reacts readily when exposed to air or sunlight, so the Vitamin C you purchase needs to be in the right form and have the right delivery method to make any difference to your skin. (Many products will not have this and so by the time you have opened the product, all the Vitamin C has been made inactive). My go-to is ZO Skin health C bright 10 % that is activated on contact with the skin's natural water barrier. It is a water-free formula and provides a potent dose of Vitamin C.

“Glycolic acid is incredibly beneficial for skin”

VITAMIN A

This is known by multiple names, including retinoids, retinol, retinoic acid, retinyl and retinal. Each derivative has to be converted by the skin into retinoic acid to be effective, therefore straight retinoic acid is the most potent. In its many forms, Vitamin A is a key ingredient in anti-ageing formulas as it has the ability to increase collagen production therefore slowing down the ageing process. Retinoids also gently exfoliate the skin and improve cellular turnover and growth, making it an effective treatment for sun damage and hyperpigmentation as well as for acne. There are two golden rules with Vitamin A derivatives. Firstly, always start with a low concentration because this gives the skin time to adjust and respond to the ingredient. Introduce it gradually into your routine, perhaps once a week, and gradually build this up. Secondly, always wear a good sunscreen during the day when using Vitamin A derivatives - it is imperative to protect your skin as these products will make your skin more sensitive. 📌

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