

Skin care advice

It is important to look after your skin, your skin works hard on your behalf, protecting you against the elements, diseases and infections. So adopt any of the following to keep it in tip top condition:

- Healthy diet
- Sun protection
- Skin care routine
- Plenty of sleep
- Lifestyle changes

Healthy diet

What you eat often affects the way your skin looks. A healthy diet results in skin which is smooth, youthful and glows with vitality. Likewise, a poor diet shows in pasty looking skin which has a dull tone or is greasy and contains spots.

Eat a well balanced diet. Aim for a good mix of foods rich in vitamins and minerals, combined with protein, carbohydrates and a small amount of fat. Limit your consumption of refined sugars, salt and saturated fats as these age your skin.

Drink plenty of water as well.

Sun protection

Being outside in the sun is fine but too much of this bad for your skin. Excessive sun exposure ages the skin but also increases the risk of skin cancer as well. A tan might be the be all and end all but it is a sign of skin damage which can have long term consequences.

This is a particular problem for people who are fair skinned and burn easily.

It is important to protect your skin against the ageing effects of ultraviolet rays emitted from the sun. This is particularly relevant for babies and young children whose skin is thinner and fragile and at greater risk of sun damage.

Wear a hat and sunglasses in hot weather and cover up. Apply a suncream which has a high sun protection factor (SPF), e.g. 30+ and do this regularly. Don't forget to apply a suncream or sunblock each time you have been in the water or at intervals throughout the day.

Avoid sunbathing at the hottest time of the day which is midday. Wear loose cotton clothing which covers your skin or go indoors. Babies and children must not stay outdoors during this time as they are at risk of sunburn and heat stroke.

Skin care routine

Hygiene is important. Wash your skin and use a moisturiser but avoid excessive washing to scrubbing which may irritate your skin. This is particularly important if you have a skin condition such as [acne](#) as this will only worsen the symptoms, e.g. spots.

Too much washing strips the skin of essential oils which then dries it out. This is a particular problem if you have [eczema](#) or [dermatitis](#) as dry skin is one of several symptoms. Use special creams or lotions as advised by your pharmacist or GP.

Plenty of sleep

A good night's sleep is vital for healthy skin. A disrupted sleep pattern or a failure to get enough sleep shows in the condition of your skin. Dark circles under the eyes, pale coloured skin or a drawn appearance are all signs of not enough sleep.

Adopt a regular routine where you go to bed at a reasonable time and get up at the same time in the mornings. Stick to this each day if possible. Most of us need between 7 and 8 hours sleep although we are all different in this aspect.

If you wear make-up then remember to clean this off your face before you go to bed.

If you have difficulty sleeping as a result of stress then try and identify the root cause. Engage in regular exercise such as walking or cycling, eat a healthy diet and limit your alcohol and caffeine intake. See professional advice if necessary.

Lifestyle changes

Late nights, junk food, alcohol and cigarettes all play havoc with your skin. Little or no exercise, a sedentary job and stress are contributing factors.

Changes to these will improve your physical and psychological health and your skin. Stop smoking, reduce your alcohol intake and take exercise. Get plenty of sleep and look at ways to reduce your stress levels, e.g. yoga, meditation etc.

This will also leave your skin looking healthy and young looking.

Finally...get into a habit of checking your skin especially if you have moles and/or freckles. Check these on a regular basis, for example, every month and see your GP if you notice any changes.