

Reader's digest

11 Ways to Improve Your Complexion in Just One Day

Dermatologists are modern-day miracle workers when it comes to rehabbing your complexion, so we're stealing their secrets to getting amazing skin STAT.

BY LINDSAY COHN

Drink up

Do yourself (and your skin) a favor and chug some H₂O. When skin is hydrated, it looks fuller, smoother, and healthier, because it's being plumped from within. And according to board-certified dermatologist Jody Levine, MD, water may also decrease your acne breakouts by lowering the concentration of oil on your skin. Try these flavored water recipes to make chugging a glass right now a lot more enticing.

Exfoliate regularly

If you do one single thing to get brighter, clearer skin, it's exfoliate. Exfoliation promotes cell turnover, unclogs pores, and helps skin look more radiant. Try a gentle daily scrub or a chemical exfoliant, such as glycolic acid. Different skin types will react differently. For sensitive skin, you may want to exfoliate less often, whereas oily complexions will do better with more frequent exfoliation. Talk to your dermatologist to determine which formulas are right for you and how frequently to use them. Do you know the many skincare benefits of sulfur? Hint: One is exfoliating.

Skip the sweets

A healthy diet is a must—and that means limiting your sugar intake. "Processed sugar glycates the collagen, which stiffens and ages it," says board-certified dermatologist Debra Jaliman, MD. "It's best to eat a lot of fruits and vegetables with a high concentration of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Find out the 30 healthiest foods you should be eating for skin and total-body health—none of which come from the vending machine at your office. These are signs you're eating too much sugar.

Drink green tea

"The polyphenols in green tea are wonderful antioxidants, which fight oxidative damage to your skin (from free radicals in your environment)," says Dr. Levine. And due to its anti-inflammatory property, green tea can actually help reduce redness, blotchiness, and irritated skin. Here's how your body benefits when you drink green tea.

Remove makeup

Every dermatologist on earth will tell you that sleeping your makeup is a no-no because it can clog pores and lead to dullness and inflammation. Simply put, wash your face! There's literally no excuse not to take off your makeup. For those night when you're too exhausted to go through your regular cleansing routine, stash a pack of makeup removing wipes—like Neutrogena Makeup Removing Wipes or Babo Botanicals 3-in-1 Hydrating Face, Hands & Body Wipes—on your nightstand. Don't make these face-washing mistakes that could dull your skin.

Catch some sleep

There's something to be said for beauty sleep. Without it, skin can look dull, according to Dr. Jaliman, who recommends sleeping at least seven to eight hours each night. "Skin rejuvenates and repairs itself while you sleep. That's what gives it that glow," she says. Consider these nighttime habits of people with great skin.

Change your pillowcase

Dr. Levine recommends sleeping on a silk pillowcase rather than a cotton one. Silk causes less friction against your skin, so it'll feel better and help prevent the telltale wrinkles that reveal which side you typically sleep on. Plus, you won't wake up with lines on your face. Did you know sleeping on silk also keeps your hair blowout looking fresh longer?

Use a gentle cleanser

Dr. Jaliman recommends looking for a mild formula with glycerin and ceramides. "Sea Radiance Gentle Cleanser is one of my favorites," she says. "It doesn't strip the skin of its natural oils and actually adds more moisture from aloe, glycerin, and ceramides. It also has the anti-inflammatory agent arnica, so it's soothing and actually minimizes redness."

Cleanse smarter

If you start to think about the germey things you touch in a day—from subway poles to your own cell phone—it can be pretty gross. If you come home and immediately start washing your face, your intentions may be good, but the results won't be. Bacteria on your hands leads to bacteria on your skin. So make sure to clean your digits thoroughly (including under your fingernails) before going anywhere near your face. Alternately, you can use a gentle washcloth. Dr. Jaliman recommends a baby washcloth because it's very soft and gentle (just make sure to use a clean one each time). You can also use a cleansing brush like a Clarisonic.

Make sure to moisturize

Moisturizing skin is a must! Healthy hydrated skin looks and feels young and supple, while dehydrated skin looks sallow and dry. And for those with acne-prone skin, missing moisturizer can actually make breakouts worse! When skin is dry, it's unable to perform its natural process of shedding. So the dead skin sits atop your skin, leading to clogged pores and blemishes. Check out the facial oils you need this winter.

Wear sunscreen, even indoors

The sun's rays can damage skin cells, leading to photoaging—and potentially skin cancer—so it's important to protect your skin. "A common mistake that I see patients make is not wearing sunscreen properly," says Dr. Levine. "It's very important to apply it before you are exposed to the sun and to reapply it every two hours." And because windows, fluorescent bulbs, and even electronic devices let in UV rays, it's crucial to protect your skin when indoors as well as outdoors. "The UV rays damage your collagen and elastic tissue and cause wrinkles. People who wear sunscreen religiously tend to look much younger than their actual age," explains Dr. Jaliman. Here's what the labels on your sunscreen actually mean.