

A Basic Anti-Aging Skin Care Routine

By Heather Hatfield

Reviewed By Debra Jaliman, MD

You can simplify your daily anti-aging routine and still look great. Here's how.

Cleanse in the Morning and Evening

"In the morning, you have oil and dust on your face from sleeping, and in the evening, you have to wash off sunscreen, makeup, dirt, and pollen," says Amy Derick, MD, a dermatologist in Barrington, Ill.

She recommends finding a gentle cleanser that matches your skin type (dry, oily, or combination). She suggests that you go easy on your skin, too.

"You only need to exfoliate two to three times a week, with a fine scrub," Derick says. "Avoid the scrubs with large beads that have irregular shapes that can irritate your skin."

Use Vitamin A to Your Advantage

Retinoids, which are made from vitamin A, are the "the foundation of any anti-aging bare-minimum routine," Derick says.

Retinoids come in two forms:

Retinol: You can buy products containing retinol without a prescription.

Tretinoin, adapalene, and tazarotene: You need a doctor's prescription for these.

Both prompt your skin to make more collagen, which gives your skin structure and elasticity. They also exfoliate your skin, removing dead, surface skin cells to soften lines.

"These are mildly irritating to the skin, so you have to strike the right balance between getting the job done without peeling or causing a rash," Derick says. Wear sunscreen, too, as these can make your skin more sensitive to the sun.

Use these nightly, and be patient. It takes months to see an improvement, but the wait is usually worth it, Derick says.

Moisturize

When you get out of the shower in the morning, and after you wash your face at night, use a moisturizer right away to lock the water in your skin, preferably a cream over a lotion, says Doris Day, MD, author of *Forget the Face Lift*. This helps your skin

look soft and smooth, which can help minimize the appearance of wrinkles.

Also, stay hydrated. Drink water when you're thirsty. You also get some water from vegetables and fruit, so include those at every meal.

Sunscreen Is a Must

"You have to wear sunscreen every day," Derick says. "It needs to be at least 30 SPF, and you need to wear it every day, all year long."

Derick prefers sunscreens that use zinc oxide or titanium dioxide to screen out the sun's rays. "There are over-the-counter brands now that go on clear and don't give you that white complexion like older versions," she says.

No Tanning

It's bad news, whether you lie out in the sun or go to a tanning bed.

"Not only does tanning overexpose you to radiation, which can cause cancer, but it also accelerates the aging process," Day says.

Just one trip to the tanning bed raises your chances of melanoma, the most dangerous type of skin cancer.

Instead, use self-tanner or bronzer for a risk-free glow.

Choose Foods Wisely

"Your diet has a really powerful impact on your skin," Day says.

Choose foods like olive oil, fish like salmon, walnuts, and almonds. These are high in omega-3 healthy fats, which can help minimize damage and keep your skin healthy as you age.

"Your skin is constantly rejuvenating," Day says. "The healthier your diet, the more nutrients your skin has for this process, and the better your skin looks and feels over time."

If You Smoke, Quit

You can look forward to better-looking skin if you kick the habit. People who smoke get wrinkles sooner than those who don't smoke.

The physical act of smoking also works against you. "Repetitive facial movements like sucking a cigarette, which makes your mouth pucker, cause wrinkles," Derick says.

If you've tried to quit before, keep trying. It often takes a couple attempts. It's worth it. If you need help, ask your doctor.