



The Skincare Rules

How to have great skin - for life!

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Foreword

Hi!

Thank you for downloading my e-book. You have made a great choice and I'm so happy that you are dedicated to taking great care of your skin

The Skincare Rules - how to have great skin for life, was inspired by my day to day work running a skincare clinic and skincare brand. One of the core services that we provide is a comprehensive consultation where each person undergoes a detailed Q & A session to determine what is going wrong in their skin's processes that is leading to their current skin condition.

While some factors and each combination of circumstances are unique to each client, we soon identified ten absolute golden rules of getting and maintaining great skin. If even one of these rules is broken more then occasionally (we're all human!), the health and appearance of your skin will suffer.

These rules apply to men and women alike.

They apply to every age and every skin colour.

They apply to you.

More about Mariga:



My name is Mariga Sheedy and I have been in the skincare industry for 25 years at the time of writing!

I graduated from the renowned Lorian School of beauty therapy, Dublin, Ireland in 1991 with internationally recognised qualifications from I.T.E.C., C.I.B.T.A.C. and the beauty world's most prestigious diploma: C.I.D.E.S.C.O.

Over the next ten years I worked with some of the top international beauty houses, while continuing to study and learn everything I could about the beauty industry and my particular passion: skincare.

In 2000 I opened my first salon and have spent the last sixteen years establishing Skin Essentials as the premier name in Ireland for unparalleled skincare treatments. Through constant education and innovation I have remained at the forefront of all the exciting changes in treatment technology and ingredients, finally culminating in the launch of my professional and home care product range Skin Essentials by Mariga. Initially envisioned as an in-house only brand for our own clients, interest from other skincare professionals has led us to launch our wholesale and training programmes and we now have partner salons in Ireland and the UK offering the Skin Essentials by Mariga protocols to their clients.

I am a contributing beauty expert for Irish Beauty trade magazine where I contribute opinions and advice on current industry concerns and am a regular speaker at national beauty trade shows where I give seminars and workshops on the business of beauty as well as technical aspects of professional treatments and products. I have also contributed expert skincare advice for South East Radio's morning mix show where I discussed skin problems and answer listeners' questions.

I have been appointed as Irish delegate to the European committee for standardisation whose objective is to develop a standard for the management and quality of beauty professional services in Europe. This is a project particularly close to my heart as I believe that raising standards for all is a must in our industry which has seen too many casualties as a result of deep discounting, leading to compromised standards. The final convention was in Brussels in September 2015 and we aim to have the standard published in 2016. I am available for comment on the progress of the committee through the contact page of our website www.skiinessentialsbymariga.com

I am extremely proud to have been invited to become the first Irish member of the International Association of Applied Corneotherapy, an international expert group whose purposes and objectives are dedicated to the advancement of scientific research in the realm of Corneotherapy and related sciences such as dermatology, cosmetology, and corneobiology. I am the first therapist in Ireland to have graduated with the International Pastiche Advanced Skin Diagnostic Technician qualification.

When I am not writing, training or concocting new skincare products, I like to hang out with my husband and cats while binge watching box sets on Netflix, or to cook extravagant and very spicy Indian feasts for anyone brave enough to try them!

[Ebook bonus link: Who is Mariga and why should you follow her rules?](#)

THE RULES

GREAT SKIN BEGINS WITH GREAT HABITS

Unfortunately, there is no quick-fix or magic bullet for getting, and keeping, beautiful skin. To get great skin that always looks bright and radiant, and ages slowly, you need to put the work in. Luckily that work is not hard. It just consists of following a few sensible rules on a daily basis. You may find that you are already incorporating many of these rules in your life already. If so, great, you are already half way there!

When you take the skincare rules on board, and practice them diligently, results will start to happen gradually and progressively until one day you will realise that you can't remember the last time you felt fed up or frustrated with your skin.

BUT this is the point where many people fail. They begin to take their problem-free skin for granted and backslide on some or all of their great new habits. Guess what happens then? You got it, back to square one with their skin. Great skin is a commitment. Great skin is a results of great daily habits applied CONSISTENTLY. Then, and only then, your new great skin is for life.

THE RULES

1. Never EVER use a skincare product that contains any of the following ingredients:

- Perfume
- Sulphates (sulfates)
- Essential Oils

2. Never pick, squeeze or otherwise inflict harm on your skin.

3. Drink 8 glasses of water a day.

4. Get enough sleep.

5. Moderate alcohol, caffeine, dairy and sugar in your diet.

6. Avoid strong sun and wear SPF30 daily.

7. Cleanse your skin every night.

8. Never use wipes of any kind.

9. Never use a scrub on your skin.

10. Above all, you must stick to your routine to get results!

WHY?

1. Never EVER use a skincare product that contains any of the following ingredients:

- Perfume**
- Sulphates (sulfates)**
- Essential Oils**

Reason: My approach is to remove all irritants from your skincare routine and replace them with ingredients that are essential for your particular skin's needs and health. It's truly unbelievable what rubbish goes into mass market skincare that is actually harmful to the skin. These ingredients cause inflammation at cellular level which at the very least will prematurely age the skin, and in some people cause major disruption to the skin's defense system, resulting in visibly stressed, problematic skin. The above list are the biggest culprits but by no means the only ones. However, if you banish these three categories from your skincare you will be off to a great start.

Many people are surprised at the inclusion of essential oils in this list because they are so common in skincare. The fact is that skin cannot differentiate between natural and synthetic fragrance and treat them all as irritants. In any case, essential oils are not naturally found in the skin so why would you want to put them there? I am a qualified aromatherapist myself and while I love essential oils I would never put them on my face. The clue is in the name: "aroma" therapy. Use them in candles!

Any good effects from useful ingredients in products will be destroyed by the inclusion of a fragrance. (Imagine spraying your perfume on your face? You just wouldn't for any reason. Same effect in all products with artificial fragrances or essential oils).

You can use fragrant products for a long time before the damage starts to show on the surface. Many people blame their age for their deteriorating skin when it is often in fact just the cumulative damage from years of irritant skincare beginning to show on the surface. This is what has been going on under the skin all the time. Skin cells that have to fight irritants on a constant basis can't have to abandon their proper job which is keeping your skin healthy and strong.

Take a look at the ingredients listings for your current skincare and check for any of the irritants listed above. If you find them, don't use it. Dropping all irritants from your skincare will have a great effect on the appearance of your skin.

The same rules apply for makeup and shower products. I recommend mineral makeup for your skin type.

2. Never pick, squeeze or otherwise inflict harm on your skin.

Reason: Here is what can happen when you pick or squeeze a spot or blackhead:

- You disturb the healing cycle, which may well begin from the beginning again depending on how rough you are, prolonging the life of the blemish.

- You drive bacteria further down into the blemish, deepening the infection and potentially worsening the end result to a scar.

- You spread bacteria from the lesion to other parts of your face

- You open the spot into a wound that is vulnerable to infection by bacteria or fungi from the environment.

What can you do instead?

Use an ice cube wrapped in kitchen paper to cool the area where you feel a spot coming up. Do this 2-3 times a day for up to a minute each time. The spot will be less angry and heal more quickly using the icing method.

3. Drink 8 glasses of water a day.

Reason: Hydration is the number one must-do for the health and appearance of the skin. The skin is a complex organ that is busy carrying out millions of processes a day to keep itself healthy and intact. These processes protect you from attack by bacteria or allergens, regulate temperature, assist in the sensation of touch, creating an interactive barrier between you and the environment via nerve endings and secretions that form the acid mantle.

Many of these processes need water to carry out their functions, which you can only get by internal consumption. Most of the nutrition needed by the skin can be applied and absorbed from the outside, but the water must come from within.

Without adequate fluid to work in and with, these processes cannot work correctly, leading to breakdown of function, inflammation, cell senescence, compromised barrier defence. In short, your skin will be dry, rough, dull and you will age faster. Now, drink up!

4. Get enough sleep.

Reason: This one is self-explanatory really. As with hydration, your body needs rest to carry out its necessary functions. Aim for 7 hours of good sleep per night.

5. Moderate alcohol, caffeine, dairy and sugar in your diet.

Reason: Alcohol and caffeine have a diuretic effect on the body, stealing water before it can be utilised in the skin's processes, leading to dehydration (see rule number 3).

Dairy can be a major factor in triggering breakouts in those prone to acne by thickening mucous membranes and secretions, including natural oils of the skin, leading to blockages.

Sugar ages your skin. Processed sugar is the worst culprit. End products from the breakdown of sugar molecules called Advanced Glycation End products (AGE's, ironically) attach to skin cells and collagen and elastin fibres, making them stiff, slow and less able to produce energy. Hello premature ageing!

6. Avoid strong sun and wear SPF30 daily.

Reason: Again, this one is self-explanatory. You can read more about UV damage in the section on day cream.

7. Cleanse your skin every night.

Reason: You need to take off makeup every night if you wear it but even if you don't you need to cleanse your skin every night to clean away grime and pollution picked up from the environment. Otherwise you are transferring all this to your pillow, squashing it into your face, and returning tomorrow night to add to the mess. Eww.

8. Never use wipes of any kind.

Reason: Where to start? Wipes are fine to keep in your car for hand-cleaning emergencies. That's it. Never, ever use wipes of any kind on your delicate facial skin. Wipes are impregnated with un-skin-friendly ingredients to keep them wet and prolong their shelf-life. The material they are made from is often abrasive. Even the mildest on the market will leave a film on your face which can irritate, clog pores and block absorption of your skincare products. I am often met with resistance to this rule but there is no flexibility here. Wipes are lazy and bad for your skin. If you can't be bothered to cleanse properly you won't have good skin. Ever. As for so-called water-based wipes that claim to have no other ingredients other than water and grapefruit seed extract as a preservative? Well, water won't cleanse your face anyway and the material can still be abrasive on your skin. No.

9. Never use a scrub on your skin.

Reason: Do I really need to explain this? As already noted your skin is a complex organ with many functions and processes. Just like your brain is a complex organ with many functions and processes. If you could see your brain would you scrub it with anything? No? I thought not. Treat your skin the same way. It is a living, breathing, working organ, not just an envelope that we are wrapped up in to keep us together. Respect it, treat it gently and never scrub it. In any case, healthy skin performs as an organ of excretion, meaning that it expels unwanted/un-needed material through the pores and follicles. It does this 24/7. Why would you need to scrub a self-cleaning surface? Perhaps it feels or looks dirty, uneven or rough. This is more likely due to over processing with cleansers and exfoliators which can cause the skin to break down, over/under produce oil and generally look and feel out of whack. No scrubbing!

10. Above all, you must stick to your routine to get results!

Reason: As mentioned in the beginning, there is no quick fix or magic bullet for having great skin. Using the right products for you and keeping to the rules daily is the only way. Consistency is key. Small actions performed every day will get you and keep you on the road to great skin. If you stop? Back to square one.

The rules are simple.

The rules are for everybody.

The rules are NON_NEGOTIABLE!

[Bonus link: sticking to your daily skincare video](#)

CLEANSING & TONING

It's amazing how often the skin problems I see are partly, if not entirely, down to incorrect cleansing.

The biggest culprits are face washes or foaming gels. These harsh, detergent products are the worst thing you can do to your skin on a daily basis. The foaming agents strip natural oils from your face, leading to tight, dry skin and eventually to a compromised skin barrier. This then leaves your skin open to irritants and damage from the outside. Even if your skin is oily these products are no good for you because they will strip water from your skin but have no effect on oil production as this is something that is genetically pre-determined.

Facial cleansing wipes are another no-no in my book. While some are worse than others, they all leave a film on the surface of the skin which can irritate and prevent your treatment serum or cream from being absorbed. You can use cotton pads if you like but always use them wet, dry will drag your skin.

So, what should you do? I recommend using a cream, lotion or oil-based cleanser that is free from fragrance, sulphates or colourings. Apply a small amount to dry skin, massage in, emulsify with water then rinse off with a muslin cloth or facecloth. There is no need for toner as all good cleansers are formulated to be water soluble and rinse clean away with water. Toner was traditionally used to remove traces of heavy cleansing creams. If you are still using these then you may use an alcohol free toner after cleansing if you like the feel of it but why not just get a better cleanser?

Of course, the most important thing about your cleanser is to use it every night. It won't do any good in the bottle!

Cleansing cloths, which to choose?

Who would have thought that there were so many options for removing your cleanser? Some like to use cotton wool, some like tissues. Me, I'm a warm cloth fan all the way.

There are several types of cloth that you will find on sale for removing cleanser, I will have a look at the pros and cons of each here to help you choose the one for you.

1. Good old-fashioned facecloth. This will do a good job of removing a light to medium makeup and can be used with any cleanser type. Make sure that the cloths you use are soft, a centuries-old hard as nails cloth will be too harsh on your skin. Buy cheap cloths and replace them often.

2. Muslin cloths. These are beloved of the beauty world but for the life of me I don't know why. I find them too scratchy on my skin and as they are so thin and lose heat very quickly. I have to rinse and repeat several times to remove makeup, adding to the scratchiness. Best used with thick balm-type cleansers.

3. Microfiber facecloths. These are my favourite as they give a deep cleanse and polish without abrasion and one swipe is enough to take off the heaviest makeup. They also stay soft through a lot of wash cycles. I have heard people say that they find that these cloths make their skin feel tight or dry but that is not my experience and I have a dry skin type. Use with any cleanser.

There is no right or wrong as to which type of cleansing cloth you use, do what feels right on your skin but here are some general guidelines whichever you choose:

- Use a clean cloth every day (microfiber are good for 2-3 days as long as they dry completely between uses).
- Use warm water, never hot, never cold.
- Don't use fabric conditioner on your cleansing cloth, it will irritate your skin.
- You can use a cloth with any cleanser, it doesn't have to be a special formula.

SERUMS

Serums are the heavy hitters in your routine. They contain targeted, active ingredients designed to address a specific skin function such as cellular renewal or inflammation. The thinner consistency of a serum, as opposed to a cream, means that the product can be absorbed deeper into the epidermis. Serums will be layered under your day or night cream.

Serums come in mostly water-based formulas although there are a few oil based ones now becoming more popular. Ideally, you need both in your routine as every ingredient with either be oil soluble or water soluble. As we have both water and oil based layers making up the structure of our skin, each with it's own needs, this means that all the necessary ingredients for skin cell health cannot ever be found in a single product. The oil soluble necessary nutrients must be dissolved in an oil base and of course then the water soluble nutrients required by the water layers can only be dissolved in a water base.

As serums are very specifically targeted to individual skin conditions it is best to have them professionally recommended by a trained skincare advisor to make sure that you are getting the best product for your needs, and not wasting money on something unsuitable for you.

Some of the conditions that can be successfully targeted by the right serum include;

- Dehydration (water-based, especially hyaluronic acid).
- Dryness (oil based, use blended oils only, never single oils).
- Redness/inflammation (water and oil based needed).
- Ageing (water and oil based to give back all the nutrition ageing takes away).

DAY, NIGHT & EYE CREAMS

As always, rules first!

1. Always use SPF during the day but never at night. This is because the sunscreen ingredients can sometimes be a little irritating so even though you can't be without it during the day for obvious reasons, it is as well to give your skin a break from it at night.

2. Any product containing Vitamin A (retinol) or any of its derivatives should only be used at night as it can make your skin light sensitive.

During the day your major skincare focus should be on protection from UV damage and other environmental factors such as heating/air conditioning, wind and pollution.

Sun Exposure And Skin Damage

How exactly does the sun age us and what can we do about it?

The damage to the skin caused by the sun is brought about by Ultra Violet rays known as UVA and UVB. UV rays have several direct impacts on the skin. Some of the most common are:

- Increase in certain enzymes that can break down the collagen and elastin fibres which keep our skin firm, plump and 'elastic', leading to wrinkles and sagging skin.

- Increase in rate of skin cell production leads to congestion, comedones and texture issues.

- Vitamins C & A which are essential vitamins in skin health and appearance are light sensitive and will be adversely affected by UV exposure.

-We all have both red and brown pigment types in our skin, in different amounts depending on our individual genetic code. UV rays alter red pigment in such a way that it becomes a dangerous free-radical that damages the DNA of nearby cells. This could affect regular skin cells or even stem cells such as melanocytes, leading to uneven colour deposits that we see on our skin as dark patches.

What can you do?

-Stay out of strong sunlight where possible. If you are exposed, reapply a good SPF every 2 hours.

-Use a high SPF with UVA & UVB filters daily. Products with added vitamins and anti-oxidants are even better.

At night your skincare focus should switch to replenishing, repair and restoration.

At night you can take advantage of all of the beautiful facial oils and rich creams that might not be practical during the day, especially if you wear makeup. Your skin is taking a break from battling pollution and UV rays so it can now focus more on absorbing and utilising corrective ingredients such as essential fatty acids for lipid layer health, growth factors for strengthening the skin and of course Vitamin A for rejuvenation at a cellular level. Layer on those lovely ingredients and wake up to a radiant, plump complexion.

Do you need a separate eye cream?

No. You Don't.

Hmm that wouldn't make a very interesting paragraph so I suppose I should elaborate a bit for those who like the science-y stuff.

The skin around your eyes is just that. Skin. While it may be thinner than the skin on the rest of the face, it is still the same structure, with the same functions and needs and should be treated the same, i.e. use the same products. Now, I know this goes against the general wisdom but believe me the only point of separate eye creams is to separate you from your money.

If a cream says 'avoid eye area' you can be sure I wouldn't use it on my face at all.

The one exception may be when the skin around your eyes is significantly different from the skin on the rest of your face and therefore needs different treatment, maybe as in the case of dark circles, which are usually hereditary or cultural and I have never heard of any product that claims to fix them actually working. If something new comes to the market, I will be happy to test it out but in the meantime save your money!

[Bonus content: learn more about eye care](#)

EXFOLIATION

This is a topic that causes confusion all the time and you will read conflicting advice in every magazine article you pick up so today I want to simplify the subject of exfoliation: what is it, do you need to do it and what should you use?

Exfoliation is the natural shedding or forced peeling of old skin cells from the upper layer of your skin. It occurs naturally in healthy skin but like all body processes it slows down with age, and if our skin cells aren't getting enough of the proper nutrition to function well. So, as we age it becomes necessary to help the process along with skincare products. The idea is to gently encourage the natural shedding process in order that the skin surface appears as smooth as possible. This new, smoother surface reflects light better than dry, dying skin cells so you see an immediate radiant effect. This can be quite addictive and I think may be the reason for what I see as a national obsession: over-exfoliation!

It is not unusual for someone to tell me that they exfoliate twice weekly or even (horror of horrors) daily when they first come for a consultation. There are even products, and lots of them, available to buy for 'daily exfoliation'. Let's look at this scientifically for a moment; cell turnover in a healthy skin occurs on average as follows:

Age: 20's 14-25 days

Age: 30's 25-30 days

Age: 40's and above 30-40 days

So, assuming that you exfoliate on the first day of the month and you are in your 30's, then there is a fresh layer of skin on the surface that won't turn over completely for around 30 days. What possible benefit can there be in exfoliating again the next day or even the next week? None at all, you are just hurting that fresh skin which will in all likelihood shorten its lifespan and therefore the length of time it reflects light well.

It is plenty to exfoliate healthy skin once per month, more often if you are in the early stages of correcting a skin condition.

What should you use?

In my opinion the only safe home exfoliator is an enzyme based product. This is because they work by triggering the cells own process of breaking down in the right conditions and therefore won't break down the 'cement' between cells that are still healthy, in the indiscriminate way that a glycolic acid or similar will.

Never use grainy scrubs, they will scratch the skin. For acid peels, microdermabrasion or other peels I would recommend only ever having them performed by a skincare professional who is trained in the procedure. In any case, over the counter versions of these peels are never comparable to what is available in a salon, if they were we would be seeing far more disasters all the time!

If you attend a good facialist she will perform any necessary exfoliation whether you need a superficial or deep treatment during your salon visits and provide the relevant homecare to keep your skin in top condition until your next visit.

Microdermabrasion is a very popular form of deep exfoliation that is available from most salons. I would caution on the overuse of these machines. While they are great if used correctly, unless you are dealing with a particular issue such as scarring or otherwise damaged skin then it is not necessary for you.

Finally, Vitamin A, also known as retinol. Any product containing any derivative of Vitamin A or retinol will already be progressively and slowly exfoliating your skin so it won't be necessary to use another exfoliator at home.

Note: discontinue use of any Vitamin A products for 3 days before and after any waxing of the area and before any salon facial treatment.

Ebook bonus: how exfoliation works and why too much is a very bad idea

BASIC HOME CARE STEPS

There aren't many rules so let's get to those first:

1. Always wear sunscreen during the day but never at night.
2. A product with Vitamin A / Retinol is only to be used at night.
3. When layering, water based serums are applied before oils/creams.

The steps.

Evening:

1. Gently cleanse using a water soluble cleanser.
2. Apply your targeted treatment product while skin is still damp. (This is usually a serum but may also be a lightweight cream).
3. Follow with a suitable cream for your skin.

Morning:

1. Just a rinse with warm water is enough (unless you have oily skin then you can use a small amount of cleanser).
2. Apply your treatment serum.
3. Apply a moisturising SPF30

A question that I am often asked is how long is it necessary to wait between serum and cream. A few seconds is enough if you are in a hurry but I like to brush my teeth in between these steps to give extra absorption time.

When using Skin Essentials by Mariga range all products can be used on face, eyes and neck.

Good-better-best: a budget-conscious approach to buying your home skin care.

In skincare, as in so many other areas of life, it is true that nothing is better than the wrong thing. Bearing that in mind, let's look at best skincare practice on a budget.

How do you approach reducing your skincare spend if the budget just isn't there this month? If you are using six different skincare products in your routine do you buy six cheaper versions or cut out a few from your routine?

The answer: it's better to use nothing than the wrong thing! So in this instance you are far better off dropping some items than replacing them with cheaper, possibly skin-damaging options. Below I have outlined a three tiered option for every budget. Simply make sure that you have the correct products for your skin from option one, then add the others if and when budget allows. (Or drop hints to your nearest and dearest for birthdays, Christmas etc.)!

Here are the basics of a good budget routine for skin protection:

Gentle, fragrance free cleanser and make up remover in one.

Daytime moisturiser containing SPF, skin-conditioning ingredients, vitamins and anti-oxidants.

Night time facial oil to add essentials fatty acids and anti-oxidants to the skin.

To make this routine even better add:

A treatment serum to address and correct any current problems with your skin.

If budget allows, you can make this routine the best possible by adding:

A high-performance product to repair daily damage and future-proof your skin, think Vitamins A, C and E, epidermal growth factors and peptides.

MASKS

Now and then you may feel like a boost is needed in your homecare routine to balance or hydrate your skin after illness, stress or just bad weather!

While we strongly recommend seeing a professional facialist where possible, sometimes you can't get in or haven't the budget so a home facial is the way to go.

Choose your favourite products and follow the steps below. Remember, when you are choosing a face mask, as well as any other products, you **MUST** follow the rules: **NEVER** use a product with perfume, essential oils or sulphates in the ingredients list. If you are unsure, just ask.

Home mini-facial

1. Cleanse with an oil-based cleaner, taking time to massage it well into the skin in an upward and outwards motion. Emulsify with warm water then remove with a microfibre face cloth.

2. Apply a gentle enzyme exfoliator all over the face and neck area, taking care around the eyes. Leave for up to 10 minutes then rinse with a warm, wet cloth.

3. Apply your usual serum.

4. Apply your chosen mask and leave for 20-30 minutes. Alternatively, a thick layer of your usual night cream, if it has been chosen correctly for your skin type will suffice.

Leave overnight

Repeat this weekly until your skin feels back to it's best, then as needed, usually 1-2 times per month.

Recommended products from the Skin Essentials by Mariga universal range for home facials:

Enzyme Exfoliator

Skin Comfort Cleanser

Lipid Repair Concentrate

Skin Comfort Cream

[Bonus content: step by step home facial video](#)

DO YOU NEED A PROFESSIONAL FACIAL?

This is a subject that causes a lot of confusion and you will hear a lot of different opinions and reasoning. Here is mine, I hope it clarifies the issue.

Firstly, what is a facial and why would you need one?

A facial is any treatment performed by a skincare professional to treat issues with the skin of the face. I include microneedling, ultrasound facials, light therapy (non-laser) and gentle acid or enzyme peels in this category.

There is a general misconception that a facial is just a relaxing hour of having nice creams rubbed into your face, and indeed these type of facials do exist, but they are in the minority and maybe are a nice addition to a spa day but this is not what you should expect from a professional skin therapist. While we always endeavour to make every treatment a relaxing experience, the emphasis is on results.

Every four weeks?

This is usually what you will hear, that the skin renews itself approximately every 28 days and so this is the time to have your facial. While there is some merit to this, it is not necessarily the same for every person. It depends on many factors, the most important being your homecare.

If you are using the correct products for your skin and keep a healthy lifestyle then you are doing all the basics of skincare yourself every day. Adding a professional treatment to this at least every three months to monitor and adapt for seasonal changes in the skin is what to aim for as a minimum. If you have the time and the budget then increasing this to a monthly facial will keep everything in top working order and maintain radiance and anti-ageing on an ongoing basis.

If however your homecare isn't right for you, you could have a facial every month and still not get your skin on track.

Sometimes when you begin a new skincare programme and if you have a problem such as a lot of congestion in the skin, scarring, hyperpigmentation or if you want to start an intensive anti-wrinkle programme, then you will need to have a course of treatment possibly as often as once a week to get your skin on the right track. The frequency will then be gradually reduced until we find a maintenance routine that is right for you.

Mature skin, sun-worshippers and smokers may need more frequent facials to keep a radiant glow as these types of skin has special challenges.

The timing of your facial treatment really doesn't matter so most people opt to have it before a big event so that they can take advantage of the 'wide awake' look that a facial offers.

Lastly, I am still asked a lot whether the skin will break out after a facial. I am glad to put that myth to rest, the answer is a definite no!

How to choose

Something I am asked a lot is what is the difference between all the facials on a skincare menu and how would you know which one to choose? The simple answer to this really is, just ask your skincare professional to recommend the treatment that is correct for your needs. That is what we spend years training for. If you find yourself in an establishment where you are being asked to choose a facial for yourself from a selection, then you are not in a professional skincare facility and need to find a better provider. (This has actually happened to me in a spa, the therapist had no knowledge that I was in the business. I could have been a farmer or a plumber asked to choose my own treatments. Jeez).

If you are worried about price just state your budget and ask what can be done under that amount.

Often you will be asked if you want a pampering or a results-driven facial. The differences between the two are:

A pampering facial is one that is mainly performed with relaxation in mind. It will involve a lot of massage, often essential oils, (shudder) and masks. It will not include any modules to correct skin function at a cellular level. Your skin will look and feel better for a day or two afterwards (as a result of the massage draining tissues) but will not have any lasting effects. This is the type of facial to have if you are on a relaxing spa day and want to unwind.

Personally if I want relaxation I will have a massage.

A results-driven facial is one that is performed with long term skin changes and benefits in mind. It is done as part of a professional skincare programme which includes skin analysis, corrective homecare and prescriptive treatments. It may include one or a combination of the following: acid peels, enzyme peels, microdermabrasion, microcurrent, phototherapy. They are not usually taken as a one-off as they are part of an overall programme. You can expect this type of facial to be more expensive. The results will last for a few weeks as long as you use the correct homecare products. (Most people on a Skin Essentials programme will have a deep salon treatment 4-6 times a year or an express version more often).

HOW NUTRITION AFFECTS YOUR SKIN

I am often asked if diet and nutrition plays a major role in the health and appearance of your skin. The simple answer is yes – your diet does have a direct effect on the appearance of your skin. I'm not referring to specifics such as do chocolate/crisps/chips cause acne (this is a huge subject and will have to wait for a longer book), but to the role of good nutrition in keeping our skin looking it's best.

Just like every other organ in our body, the skin needs good nutrition to function as it should. While we can provide a lot of nutrition from the serums or creams we apply on the outside, it is really important to supply them from the inside too. Be careful of low to no fat diets, these are very bad for your skin. Here are a few simple suggestions for you to think about.

- Eat a variety of different coloured fruit and veg. The darker the food, the more anti-oxidant in general. Anti-oxidants help to protect the skin from damage.

- Reduce your intake of caffeine / alcohol. These will contribute to dehydration, inflammation and premature ageing.

- Be careful with dairy consumption if your are prone to breakouts/eczema.

- Reduce refined carbs/sugars as much as possible in your diet. These can lead to inflammation in the skin and accelerate the ageing process.

- A good way to get extra anti-oxidants in your diet is by drinking herbal teas such as red or white tea.

- Try to incorporate Essential Fatty Acids into your diet to help keep skin supple. Find these in fish or seeds such as flax/sunflower. Supplements are fine too.

Moderate the following for all skin types:

- Sugar consumption
- Dairy
- Alcohol consumption
- Fried/caramelised foods
- Hot, spicy foods
- Caffeine

These are just some general guidelines applicable to all skin types. For specific, personalised advice you will need a consultation from a suitably qualified skin diagnostic technician.

The Power of Water

One of the most basic requirements for skin health and youthfulness is water. All the cells and systems of the skin are dependent on the presence of water to function. Drinking eight glasses of water a day is the first step towards having the smooth, radiant skin we all desire.

Many people tell me that they forget or they don't like water or even that they are afraid of having to be near a bathroom all day if they drank the required amount, but there is no other way around it. Skin needs water and the only way to obtain it is by drinking it. Without your commitment to this step the effectiveness of your skincare regime will be reduced.

It is perfectly fine to put a few drops of lemon or lime juice in to flavour it if you find that more palatable, it doesn't have to be plain water. Also, any other 'good' fluids that you drink during the day will count towards your total so include juices, soup, soft fruits

and caffeine-free herbal teas in your diet. The ‘bad’ fluids are those containing caffeine or alcohol as these are diuretics and will reduce the total amount of available fluid to your body systems.

It is best to sip constantly throughout the day to maintain hydration levels. Remember if you feel thirsty this is your body’s way of telling you that you are already becoming dehydrated.

Drink up and enjoy the benefits to your skin.

Lifestyle Choices

Many things that you choose to do or not to do on a regular basis will affect the long-term quality and appearance of your skin. Some of these things are unavoidable (it’s hard to go hiking indoors if hill walking is your thing), some can be moderated and some should be cut out completely where possible.

NEVER

- Go outside without SPF applied
- Use fabric conditioner
- Smoke
- Use recreational drugs of any kind

Thank you for reading The Skincare Rules - how to get great skin for life.

If you enjoyed it and found it useful please tell your friends!

I have lots more I'd like to share with you on our social channels.

Mariga x

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