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A HEALING ARTS RESOURCE



SKIN, BEAUTIFUL SKIN

By Sandy Penny

While living in Houston for 35 years, I never appreciated how much the sweltering humidity was keeping my skin looking young. Three years in Taos have taken a toll on my skin, and apparently, I'm not the only one. The dry air, cold winds and bright sun can be treacherous, but even so, many people in Taos

look exceptionally young. So I set out to uncover Taos's skin care secrets. I hounded local skin care providers for good products, easy regimens and quick tips. They were happy to share.

BEAUTY IS MORE THAN SKIN DEEP

Healthy skin contributes to overall health and

disease prevention by blocking germs and bacteria from entering your blood stream. Moist skin does a better job of protecting you than dry skin.

INSIDE OUT

Your skin can be oily and still be dehydrated; oil and moisture are not the same thing. Try this simple test to see if you are well hydrated. Pinch the skin on the back of your hand; if it immediately bounces back, you are hydrated. If it sticks together, you are dehydrated. Drink five to eight glasses of pure water daily. Exercise provides more blood and oxygen to your epidermis, and sweating is good for your skin, but be sure to increase your water and mineral intake. Omega-rich foods and Vitamins C, D, A and E all contribute to healthier, younger skin. Sadly, coffee, black teas, cigarettes and alcohol cause dehydration and aging.

SOAK IT UP

Warm showers and baths for only about 10 minutes a day add moisture to your skin.

Spending too long in the water, however, can cancel out many of the benefits. Extreme water temperatures can shock the skin and cause moisture and oil loss and damage blood vessels in sensitive facial skin.

EXFOLIATE

Scrub your body once or twice a week with a loofa or soft brush to allow skin to breathe better. Scrubbing too hard and too often can cause cracks that leave you open to bacterial growth. Apply moisturizer or oil immediately after scrubbing to soothe and seal.

OUTSIDE IN

I personally don't use any oils that I would not eat. Since skin is permeable and absorbs what you apply to it, I prefer organic food grade oils. My favorites are light-weight apricot kernel and vitamin E in an almond oil base. If you have oily skin, apply oil to unclog pores and signal your skin to stop overproducing. If you're a vegetarian, when you get a facial, ask if they use animal products. They can usually

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provide other options. Apply topical vitamins and minerals to provide antioxidants. Acne sometimes responds to antibiotic treatment, internally or topically.

FACIAL CLEANSERS

Using bath soap on your face destroys the skin's protective layer. Use a gentle cleanser formulated for your skin type. Amino-based cleansers leave a protective amino acid layer for a dewy look and feel.

DE-STRESS

Stress contributes to skin eruptions. Massage reduces stress, and the oils used by massage therapists give your skin an extra boost. Performed by a trained skin therapist, face massage relaxes the muscles used to express emotions that hold stress and cause wrinkles.

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

Tanning does not indicate good health. Ultraviolet radiation (UVR) exposure causes loss of elasticity, wrinkles, discoloration, freckles or

age spots, benign (non-cancerous) growths, and cancerous lesions. UVR has two subtypes: UVB and UVA. UVB rays cause sunburns and tanning. UVA rays promote cancers and photoaging (skin damage from long-term exposure). Most sunscreen products block UVB rays. Fewer products block UVA rays, so you'll want to:

Avoid sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. and limit exposure to less than an hour per day. Only 10 to 15 minutes daily are needed for health.

Wear wide-brimmed hats, long-sleeved shirts and pants.

Slather on generous amounts of sunscreen and reapply frequently (every 2 to 3 hours). In Taos, use paraben-free sunscreens that offer a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) 30 with UVA and UVB coverage. Parabens have been found in breast tumors, so avoid them. Read the labels.

Tanning beds can damage your skin. ☼

TAOS EXPERT SKIN CARE TIPS

Danny at Skin Sanctuary promotes six skin care basics: 1) cleanse appropriately, 2) exfoliate gently and intelligently, 3) hydrate— increase H2O content with hyaluronic acid, 4) feed skin with topical antioxidants (vitamins and minerals), 5) moisturize and seal in moisture, 6) protect skin with sun block.

Toni Leigh, founder of Desert Blends of Taos says: Many indigenous New Mexico plants offer natural sun protection and moisture retention because they thrive in the desert. Burdock root is full of calcium, iron and zinc and offers natural UVR protection. Chaparrille is considered a natural cancer preventative, and evening primrose is full of omegas. Use products that contain no compounds, fillers or synthetics. Whole plant products build natural immunity and provide antibacterial properties.

Florence Lajeunesse, owner of Face Place, offered several winterizing tips: As the weather changes, change your moisturizer because colder temperatures, wind and layers of clothing contribute to dryness. A hydrating moisturizer helps protect skin and improve the look and texture. Apply sunscreen to your hands to help prevent lines, wrinkles and age spots. Double cleanse your face if you wear foundation. An extra 30 seconds makes a huge difference in preventing clogged pores, and clean skin maximizes the benefits of skin treatments.

Megan Connell, Licensed Massage Therapist and co-owner of Conscious Health focused on the ski season: Skiing in the high desert is extra harsh on skin. Even short expo-

sure requires a high-quality, all natural sunscreen and proper hydration. Choose natural products; it is just as important to be conscious about what we put on our bodies as in them. Skiers should restore moisture to dry, chapped skin after a long day in the cold, wind, and sun. I hand-blend moisturizers with regenerative and emollient herbs and essential oils that eliminate fine lines and wrinkles.

Deahni of Taos Skin Care takes a holistic approach: Good conscious skin care can cut six to ten years off your age and bring out your natural radiance. When you look in the mirror and feel good about what you see, you take that joy out into the world.

L. Bernice Sandoval, Licensed Massage Therapist and skin product representative, summed it up with: Feed, water and protect your skin. Beautiful skin is healthy skin. The most advanced skin care now utilizes self-preserving technologies. We all get so much exposure to potentially-harmful chemicals in our environment that we don't need to put them on our skin.

Ruth Fahrback of Taos Hemp offered a unique recommendation: Hemp seed anti-aging crème contains Omega 6 and Omega 3 essential fatty acids in a 3 to 1 ratio. Hemp is a source of the entire protein spectrum for cellular development, health, anti-aging and skin's elasticity.

Linda Cameron, salon owner, Spirits of Beauty contributed these tips: Rosacea (red rash) can be caused by the liver. Drink warm lemon water in the morning to clear toxins. Eat live culture yogurt with no sugar to combat breakouts. ☼

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