



# skin

# & A

There's nothing like healthy, glowing skin to boost your confidence! As part of this month's skin special, we've got the answers to your most common skincare questions. Follow our advice on dealing with everyday skin issues and you'll not only look fabulous but feel healthier too!

## IS IT OK TO WASH MY FACE WITH SOAP?

The trick is to ask yourself if it feels right. 'If you use soap and it doesn't make your face feel tight, by all means go ahead,' says holistic beauty therapist Bharti Vyas, author of *Whole Body Beauty Wisdom* (Marlowe & Company, £8). 'Young, healthy people find that soap rarely disturbs their skin – but when you get older your skin's texture changes and can become drier. Once that happens, try a cream-based cleanser or moisturising face wash instead.' If you prefer soap, choose one that's pH balanced – which means it's designed to match the acid level of your skin. Use a

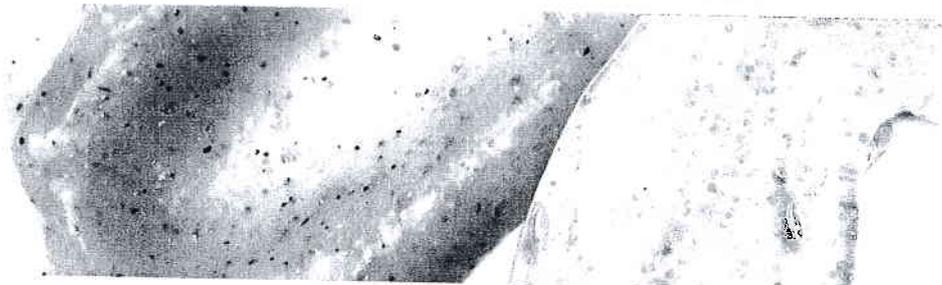
dermatologically tested product,' says Dr Emma Edmonds, a dermatologist for the British Skin Foundation. 'Non-dermatologically tested soaps may contain known irritants, including scents, preservatives, disinfectants and dyes.'

## AT WHAT AGE SHOULD I START USING EYE CREAM?

Many beauty therapists recommend applying eye cream as soon as you start wearing make-up. 'You can start using products that hydrate the eye contour area from your early teens, and anti-ageing products as early as your mid-twenties!' says Marion Kane, medical communications manager at Vichy.

The skin around the eye contour area is more delicate than skin on the rest of your face, which could explain why wrinkles around your eyes develop far sooner. Some experts believe you start getting eye contour wrinkles in your teens – despite the fact that they don't show until years later – and that these wrinkles could be prevented by using an eye cream long before you see the first signs of ageing.

'The skin in this area is very sensitive, so you should use a cream that has been specifically developed for the eye area, as a normal moisturiser is too rich and could make eyes look puffy,' adds Marion. 'Eye creams are more lightweight than ordinary facial moisturisers, so won't swamp the delicate skin around the eyes.'



## CAN I OVER-EXFOLIATE?

When you see the great results after exfoliating, it's tempting to think that the more you do it, the more your skin will glow. But that's not the case. If you use an exfoliating skin product too often – a scrub or a microdermabrasion kit, for example – you could end up with red, dry patches or even break-outs.

'Whatever type of exfoliating you try, don't do it more than twice a week or your skin could get damaged,' advises Bharti Vyas. 'Facial skin is very delicate, so exfoliate very gently for less than a minute once a week and use a product specifically designed for the face.'

## JUST HOW GOOD IS WATER FOR YOUR SKIN?

'If you want to avoid having tired, dry-looking skin, then drinking plenty of water is a must,' says Dr Edmonds. 'It will replenish the fluid in your skin and also help to ensure that your body, and therefore your skin, doesn't become dry and dehydrated. Avoiding caffeine drinks will help, too, as these are diuretics.'

Dr Edmonds recommends drinking eight

glasses of water a day. 'But,' says Bharti Vyas, 'if you find yourself rushing to the toilet soon after you've had a glass of water, it could be a sign that your body doesn't necessarily need a whole glassful at a time. If your body has enough water, any excess fluid will pass into your circulation and be filtered out by the kidneys, which is what makes you want to go to the loo. Try sipping smaller amounts of water throughout the day instead.'

'Water also helps flush out toxins from the cells, which in turn helps to prevent spots,' she adds. Bharti recommends drinking a detoxifying glass of hot water with a few slices of fresh ginger, a teaspoon of honey and a teaspoon of fresh lime or lemon juice every morning to strengthen the skin and help protect against spots and blemishes.

If all that water isn't doing anything for your taste buds, you'll be glad to hear that other fluids – fruit juices, herb teas and even tea and coffee – will also count towards your daily fluid intake.

'But water is best as it gets into your system much faster,' says Bharti. If you drink juice, coffee or tea, the water has to be separated out during the digestive process – if you drink plain water, it will go straight to the cells where it's needed, including your skin.'

## SHOULD I SQUEEZE MY BLACKHEADS?

Blackheads happen when your pores get clogged with oil and dead skin cells. If a blocked pore becomes inflamed or exposed to bacteria, the result is a full-blown spot.

According to the Acne Support Group ([www.stopspots.org](http://www.stopspots.org)), if they're black, you can squeeze. But if they're small, raised lumps, leave them alone, as whiteheads don't form in pores but under the skin, and you'll infect the area. To squeeze blackheads, wash your hands and then gently squeeze the edges with your index fingers. Finish with a dab of antiseptic lotion or tea tree oil.

You can steam open pores before squeezing to make it easier. Or try a blackhead removal strip, such as **Biore Pore Strips**, £7.99 for six.

## HOW DO I KNOW WHAT SKIN TYPE I HAVE?

Good question! It's important to know your type – so many products are designed for normal, oily, combination, dry or sensitive skin. See below for how to recognise yours.

'Knowing your skin type is vital for good-looking skin,' says Shaina Myers, principal of the Northern College of Beauty ([www.beautycourses.co.uk](http://www.beautycourses.co.uk)): 'It will help you choose the correct products as your skin changes and matures. If you use products that are specially designed for your skin type – and most are clearly labelled these days – it will help balance your skin's needs,' she says.

So, for instance, if you have oily skin, you'll need a moisturiser to help reduce the sebum (oil) levels, making your skin feel less greasy.

So what's your skin type? Check here to find out...

### Normal

Smooth, even texture with medium pores and healthy colour. No particular problems.

### Oily

May look and feel greasy with large pores. Prone to blackheads and spots.

### Combination

Gets greasy easily and quickly across your forehead, nose and chin (the T-zone) but normal on cheeks.

### Dry

Feels tight, especially after cleansing. May have an

uneven, rough surface with some flaky patches. Prone to fine wrinkles and may look dull.

### Sensitive

Looks thin and delicate with fine pores, flushes easily, prone to red blotches and uneven skin texture.



## SAY I FORGET TO TAKE MY MAKE-UP OFF AT NIGHT?

If it's occasionally, it won't do any harm. But then it's not going to do your skin much good either, especially if you're susceptible to spots. Going to bed with your make-up on can clog up pores and will make your pillowcases look pretty disgusting too!

With the number of convenient make-up removers available today, there's really no excuse to go to bed wearing make-up,' says Dr Steve Hewitt, senior medical advisor at Clearasil Skincare. 'If it's very late at night, try using a cleansing wipe. It's a quick and easy way to cleanse and your skin will definitely benefit from the effort.'

## WHY DO I GET DARK CIRCLES UNDER MY EYES?

Some people are naturally more prone to dark under-eye circles. If you have dark skin, for instance, you may have more pigmentation around your eyes than a light-skinned person. Some experts believe allergies such as hay fever or asthma can be a cause of dark under-eye circles, though they're not sure why.

There are also several lifestyle factors involved,' explains Shenaz Shariff, beauty therapist at the Face and Body Clinic in Harley Street. 'Dark circles can be caused by lack of sleep, poor diet, dehydration or poor circulation. So it's important you get eight hours' sleep a night, eat a healthy diet and drink two litres of water a day.'

## DO I NEED TO MOISTURISE IF I HAVE OILY SKIN?

'Save your pennies,' says Dr Hewitt. 'If your skin is oily, you won't need to use a moisturiser, unless you've just deep-cleansed your skin – or you use a toner that contains alcohol, which can dry the skin.'

Throughout the year, however, this may change. 'Even oily skin needs moisturising in the winter,' says Dr Hewitt. 'That's when skin is most prone to dryness, due to extremes in temperature as you go from indoor heating to outdoor cold. Choose a light, oil-free product that won't make your skin look shiny.'

## WHY DO I GET SPOTS WHEN I GET MY PERIOD AND WHEN I'M STRESSED?

It's all to do with your hormones. 'Around 50 per cent of women will get breakouts during their period,' says Dr Hewitt. 'And both sexes can get spots during times of stress, such as exam time or before a job interview. Outbreaks are triggered by fluctuating hormone levels.'

Hormones called androgens stimulate the sebaceous glands in your skin, which produce oil. Around the time of your period and when you're stressed, androgen levels increase, so your glands produce more oil, which can block your pores and cause spots.

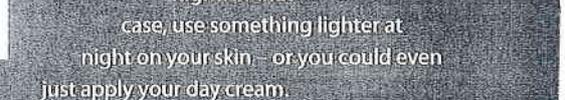
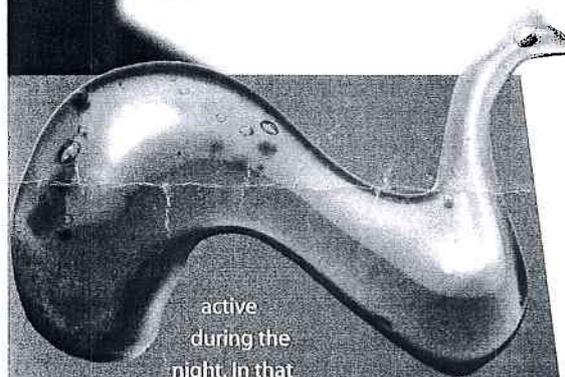
'If you're prone to spots at these times, keep them at bay by using a deep-cleanser in the two weeks leading up to when your breakouts usually occur,' suggests Dr Hewitt. Try **Clearasil Daily Spot Control Deep Cleansing 3 in 1 Wash, £4.99 for 150ml.**

## SHOULD I USE A DIFFERENT DAY AND NIGHT CREAM?

The main difference between day and night creams is that the latter is much thicker and heavier in texture.

'Night creams contain more moisturising ingredients because your skin is busier repairing itself while you're asleep than at any other time of day,' says Marion Kane. 'Skin renewal is accelerated at night. But as you get older, this process slows down – so you need a specific night cream that's developed to stimulate skin fibre production.'

However, if your skin is oily, you may get more break-outs after using a night cream because your sebaceous glands are more



active during the night. In that case, use something lighter at night on your skin – or you could even just apply your day cream.

## WHEN SHOULD I APPLY BODY MOISTURISER?

The simple answer is every day, according to Bharti Vyas. The skin on your body sheds at the rate of seven million cells a day, so it is a good idea to bathe or shower daily to help remove the dead cells, and then moisturise to help protect your skin from drying out.

'Choose a moisturiser that doesn't make your skin feel sticky, especially on any areas that are exposed, such as arms and legs,' says Bharti. Try **Vaseline Intensive Care Aloe Vera and Cucumber Body Lotion, £2.59, for 250ml**, which is absorbed super-quickly.