

Know the Skin You're In

How your choices affect your body's largest organ

Joseph Borkovic

In a local Saltspring Island coffee shop early on a sunny Tuesday morning, I met a beautiful Norwegian lady who looked to be in her late 40s. She suddenly asked me what I was doing to my skin. Smiling, I exclaimed, "Sorry?" It turned out she was simply curious about my healthy complexion.

Well, I discovered I had a real skin-care expert on my hands. Looking extraordinary at 70, she was living proof. Over organic coffee, we traded some of our best skin-care tips. Here's some of what we talked about.

Our skin is a reflection of our most intimate physical and psychological selves. Less than a millimetre thick in some places to more than five millimetres in others, it is draped upon us in three integrated layers: first, the bloodless epidermis; second, the dermis, comprised of elastin, nerve endings and about 70 per cent collagen; and third, subcutaneous fat.

Blood and lymph nourish the skin; one-half to two-thirds of the body's total blood supply is distributed to the skin, which takes in oxygen and releases some carbon dioxide. Thin blood vessels, or capillaries, help release heat and shuttle nutrients to the uppermost layers of the dermis and epidermis and carry away wastes produced by cell metabolism.

Under your skin

The skin is itself made of 50 to 75 per cent moisture and is able to maintain

this level only by the secretion of protective sebum, which coats its surface. If these natural oils are removed by any means whatsoever, especially from the hands, this protection is lost.

The skin not only acts as our primary barrier between the external and internal worlds, but it also carries on a multitude of functions, including regulating body temperature, expelling toxins, and protecting us from many types of environmental radiation and the invasion of harmful bacteria.

Taking care of yourself starts in the small things you do every day. Learn the rules of nature, then follow them with your heart.

Most of us have heard that the skin is the body's largest organ, but did you also know that your skin is a key anti-aging component in maintaining health and youthfulness? The primary reason for this is the skin's profound absorbency; just consider the principle behind the nicotine patch.

Cosmetic hazards

As we age, skin loses its ability to retain moisture, the dermis loses its elasticity and the collagen stretches and dies. Lines and wrinkles begin to form, aggravated by our western lifestyle of processed foods, environmental stress and products containing synthetics or petroleum-based ingredients, including those for skin and body care. This leads to dehydration, which is further antago-

nized by the lack of pure, good quality water (tap water does not count).

We know that the tiniest amount of a substance can have a profound affect upon our bodies—for healing or harming. From the time we are babies and grow through adulthood, we rub an estimated 2,000 litres (84,000 ounces) of chemical-based lotions, shampoos, cosmetics and body products into our skin more than 470,000 times! Conventional, mass-produced cosmetics and lotions not only pre-age you in numerous ways, but they are also linked to diseases, including breast cancer. They can affect PMS severity and cause mood swings, bloating (lymphatic edema), weight gain (from toxicity) and decreased sex drive.

Animal ingredients are commonly used today in skin care because they are generally cheaper. For example, did you know hydrolyzed collagen can come from hydrolyzed animal protein (and does not help or enhance your skin), or that the shimmer you find in cosmetics is commonly provided by synthetics, even fish scales?

Health, not hype

The marketing hype against aging seems to have taken on the proportions of a war—for our consumer dollars, that is. In the pursuit of beauty and anti-aging, we are now doing more harm to ourselves even with products from the "natural" \$31 billion US market.

The problem is that there has been no standard to define what "natural" means in product labelling. Arsenic is "natural," and cyanide is found in



apple seeds. The United States Department of Agriculture made important changes on Oct. 21, 2002 by implementing national labelling standards for the word "organic." While Canada will soon follow the US example with its own labelling regulations, education is still the buyer's best

icals that can harm you and the environment. Extensive university and Australian field research has shown that certified biodynamic and organic ingredients provide the skin with a higher available vitamin and mineral content over conventional (pesticide-sprayed) raw ingredients.



The marketing hype against aging seems to have taken on the proportions of war.

recourse, especially because these types of non-standard products really affect the health of our skin.

Look for products labelled "certified organic," which means an independent certification body has approved them as containing only organic ingredients and no artificial fertilizers or growth hormones, chemically synthesized pesticides, genetically modified ingredients, synthetics or harsh industry chem-

“

From babyhood through adulthood, we rub an estimated 2,000 litres of chemical-based lotions, shampoos, cosmetics and body products into our skin more than 470,000 times!

”



Beautiful skin, naturally

We can beneficially influence our skin in three ways: externally through lifestyle and prevention of stress, nutritionally through the substances we ingest, and therapeutically through how we treat our skin. The best way to achieve this is with quality lifestyle choices—restful sleep, eating fresh, local and certified organic fruits and vegetables, getting enough of the right types of essential fatty acids through beneficial oils, and buying or making your own clean, energized water, which is crucial for cellular hydration to expel body toxins. Supplementation may also be recommended, preferably liquid or high-quality colloidal vitamins and minerals. Avoid processed foods, synthetics, and environmental and electromagnetic stress.

I still bump into Evie once in a while, and always remember her last words to me that day, in her sweet Danish-Dutch accent, "Joe, taking care of yourself really starts in the small things one does every day. You just have to learn the rules of nature, then follow them with your heart, that's all."

Our skin is a mirror of our health and deserves some good reflection. **F**

Joseph Borkovic combines the study of law, organics and biodynamics in creating Eco-dynamics_3-TM, a dream of sustainability: eco and ego in balance. A co-founder of Goodnessyou-Goodnessme, he now assists with memorandums that will become the legal standards for organics in the US. Phone 250-595-0409 or e-mail stewards@goodnessyou-goodnessme.org.

We invite your feedback at editorial@teamlive.com. For more information, please search "skin care" at alive.com.