

It's a Guy Thing

Who says skin care is just for women?

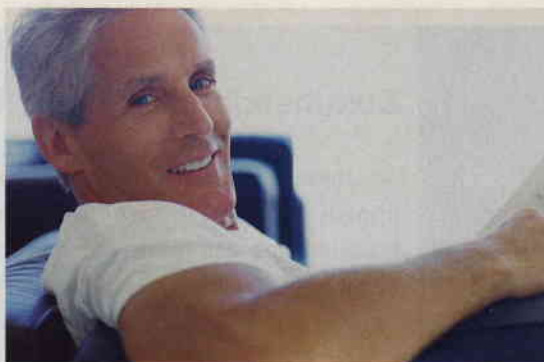
Jacob Bond

It's been said frequently that men age more gracefully than women. Biologically, that's true—the male dermis is thicker than the female equivalent, and ages more slowly, which explains why men develop fewer wrinkles earlier in life. However, this doesn't mean that men should neglect their skin.

While men and women share many hobbies and lifestyle choices, men are generally less likely to practise a regular skin care regimen. Here are some factors that can affect the health and youthfulness of facial skin.

Skin stressors

Smoking can cause irritation and interfere with the elimination of toxins, which can then result in congested pores. Weekend activities such as roughhousing on a muddy football field or working up a sweat playing tennis can interfere with the elimination of dead skin if proper cleansing isn't part of a daily regimen. Business travellers are prone to dehydration from dry, pressurized airplane cabins and may exacerbate the condition with alcohol consumption. A diet lacking in nutrients but heavy in processed food, starches and sugars also adds stress to the skin—ingested toxins find their way to the surface and



need to be cleared away regularly.

The most significant difference between men's and women's skin care is that men shave their faces. Shaving offers the benefit of exfoliating; however, many men have sensitive skin that can become irritated by shaving. Using harsh shaving creams and gels, which may contain synthetic and petrochemical ingredients, can further exacerbate skin irritation. If possible, shave in the shower—the hot water will soften your beard. If you do need a lubricant, use a gentle, natural oil-based soap.

New Treatment for Patchy Skin

Many people know what it's like to experience scaly, rough skin patches—and middle-aged and elderly individuals with a fair complexion are especially susceptible. Actinic keratoses (AKs) are the most common premalignant lesions found on exposed skin. If left untreated, they may progress to squamous cell carcinoma.

Conventional topical treatment for AKs is liquid nitrogen cryotherapy. Doctors also frequently use the drug 5-fluorouracil for multiple AKs, particularly on the face and scalp. Unfortunately, patients using 5-fluorouracil experience uncomfortable side-effects, such as pain and embarrassing skin redness, which prevent them from completing treatment.

But Dr. Babar K. Rao et al. from the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in New Jersey recently released a study on the efficacy of using a natural glycoalkaloid cream for treatment of AKs. Dr. Rao

worked with six AK patients, applying the cream twice a day for six weeks. Within that time, five patients saw a full resolution of their AK lesions, with the sixth patient experiencing a partial resolution.

Dr. Rao attributes the success of the glycoalkaloid cream to endogenous lectins, or small branches, on the surface of the AK cell. The branches act as receptors that are attracted to the sugar portion of the glycoalkaloid, drawing it into the damaged cell. Once inside, the alkaloid portion of the glycoalkaloid works as a toxin to cause cell death. Over time, layers of the AK lesion are exfoliated, eventually leaving a clear patch of skin and no scar.

Patients began to see an improvement on AK lesions within two weeks of treatment with the glycoalkaloid cream. They also experienced little to no pain during the treatment, unlike typical therapies.



20s

The 20s are your maintenance and prevention years. It's ideal to start a skin care regimen while you're young. When you hit your late 20s, collagen, which helps skin maintain its elasticity, will start to decrease by about one per cent a year—more if you spend time in the sun.

30s

Soon you may start to see wrinkles, little brown sun freckles (called solar lentigines) and blood vessels appearing on the top layer of the skin. If this sounds familiar, use a natural sunscreen and indulge yourself in a weekly facial scrub to remove dead outer layers of skin. This will slowly eliminate brown spots and other skin discolourations, as well as prevent the appearance of fine lines.

40s

Sleep lines begin to materialize on the forehead and deep folds may run from the nose to the corners of the mouth. Possibly more sun freckles/solar lentigines have appeared. Skin is also getting dryer. To hydrate your skin, drink lots of clean, filtered water. Also avoid sugars, meat, coffee, pop and alcohol.

50s and beyond

Oil gland activity will slow down as you get older, making your skin dry and flaky. You'll start to lose pigment and notice the appearance of age spots. Wrinkles will deepen, especially around the mouth and eyes, partly because as we age our bodies gradually lose palmitoleic acid. To replenish skin and fight wrinkles externally, use macadamia oil as a moisturizer. Also select natural skin-care products containing absorbable antioxidants such as vitamins A, C and E to slow the natural aging process and fight against lipid peroxidation (free-radical damage) from the sun and environmental pollutants. **F**

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

Your Five-Step Facial-Care Plan

Steps two and four should not be done every day but included several times a month. Steps one, three and five make a simple, effective daily regimen.

1. Cleanse. Regular cleansing removes dirt and grime. Properly cleanse your face with warm water and an organic oil-based soap or cleanser. Never pull on your face with a towel to dry, as this will damage your collagen fibres. Instead, gently pat the towel on your face. Cleanse before bed to prevent bacteria from contributing to any premature aging overnight.

Mass-market bar soaps contain deodorants and antibacterial chemicals. Never use them, as they strip natural oils, leaving you susceptible to premature aging. Use organic soaps that contain no lye in the form of sodium hydroxide/chloride but do contain moisturizing oils such as macadamia or avocado.

2. Exfoliate. The cleansing will open your pores and prepare the skin for an exfoliating facial scrub.

3. Tone. After cleansing, remove dead surface cells and rebalance your skin's pH level with a natural toner. The best toners contain no alcohol, artificial fragrances or colours. Toners with witch hazel as a base, available at health food stores, are an excellent choice. (For a natural aftershave that works as a skin toner, see page 20.)

4. Mask. Once a week, follow cleansing with a mask. Hydrating masks use antioxidants to moisturize and replenish dull, dry skin. Grape seed extract is a superb, naturally occurring antioxidant. Masking exfoliates dead surface cells and unclogs pores so that toning and moisturizing products work more effectively. It also stimulates blood circulation and makes your skin feel smoother. A facial mask will also draw out impurities from beneath the top layers of the epidermis.

5. Moisturize. Finally, for protection and lubrication, hydrate your face with a quality day or night moisturizer. Again, avoid synthetics, fragrances and petrochemical ingredients.

Finally, always protect yourself from excessive sun. Before you surf, ski or enjoy any other outdoor activity, always apply a natural sunscreen to prevent wrinkling.

Remember, skin care isn't just for women. Developing good daily and weekly habits now can help you keep looking great in your 60s, 70s, 80s and beyond!