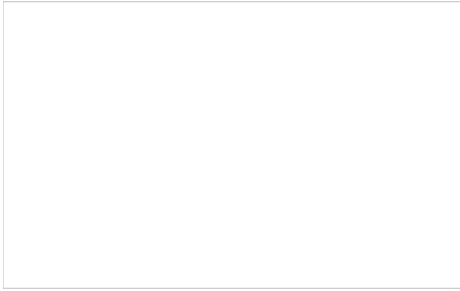


How to Pamper Your Skin as the Seasons Change



What to do right now to get your face and body ready warmer weather.

As the days get longer and temperatures begin to climb, off go the sweaters and boots and on go the shorts and sandals.

But while your spirit may be singing the praises of spring, it's also likely your skin is still crying out with the winter blues -- dry, scaly, rough, spots on heels, knees, and elbows as well as stressed- out, overheated, undernourished skin on your face and body.

"Nothing is worse for skin than a long, cold winter -- the low humidity in conjunction with hot air, heat, and less fresh air often can leave your skin looking dull, dry, rough, and even wrinkled and older," says Cheryl Citron, medical doctor, the past president of the New Jersey Dermatology Society.

Knees, elbows, heels, and toes can also suffer from a winter in boots -- where too often, says Citron, what we don't see, we neglect.

"When our feet and legs aren't on display the way they are during warmer weather, we tend not to moisturize as much, and we don't pay as much attention to things like dry cuticles; unfortunately, it doesn't take long for skin that is neglected to react, becoming dry, dull, and flaky, and sometimes even red and inflamed," Citron tells us.

The good news: Beautiful, summer-sweet skin is closer than the nearest strawberry patch! The best place to start, say experts, is with a head-to-toe moisture treatment -- and you don't need high-priced products or cosmetics to do the job right.

The Best Moisturizer?

"One of the best moisturizers or creams you can use is white petroleum jelly -- particularly on the very roughest, toughest areas of skin, such as heels, elbows, and knees," says Heidi Waldorf, medical doctor, director of dermatologic laser surgery at Mt. Sinai Medical Center in New York City. And if you've ever heard that old wives' tale about drenching feet in Vaseline and then donning a pair of white cotton socks -- well, Waldorf says it's not a myth and it really *can* dramatically change the way your feet look and feel, almost *overnight*.

"If you don't like sleeping in socks, then just smear on the petroleum jelly right before you put on your gym socks and sneakers before working out, or even just to run errands," she says. If hands are in equal need of a spring makeover, coat them with petroleum jelly as well, and then don a pair of white cotton gloves.

Any time you are doing a household or garden chore that requires you to wear rubber gloves or gardening gloves, put on the petroleum jelly first, then the white gloves, then the rubber gloves over that," says Waldorf. By the time your chores are done, she says, you've given your hands a pretty terrific beauty treatment.

Prepare for Hair Removal

If you've paid a lot less attention to body hair during winter months, you may be facing a major de-fuzzing come spring and summer. According to beauty expert Claudia Spagnolo, among the best things you can do for your skin is a full-body exfoliating scrub before you do any hair removal treatments.

"If you use a mild natural ingredient like brown sugar to gently, and I repeat, gently rub your body several days before having a waxing or chemical hair removal, you'll loosen and remove dead skin cells, which will not only make your hair removal easier but also safer," says Spagnolo, director of the DeFranco Spagnolo Salon and Spa.

Spagnolo says that the full-body scrub is also a great way to get ready for an application of any cosmetics or faux tanning product, adding that it "helps to ensure a more even application with less streaking."

Do not however, use any body scrub or exfoliation product the day of your treatment -- even your faux tan. The best time to pretreat, she says, is 24 hours to 48 hours prior to your hair removal or using cosmetics which gives you fake tan.

Facing Spring Skin: Makeover Magic for Your Face

While exfoliation may be key to achieving a sleeker, satiny smooth body -- with or without a faux tan -- that's nothing compared to what the same treatment can do for your face. But this is where the similarity between seasonal face and body care ends. The reason? Waldorf says never use a mechanical, exfoliating scrub on your face.

"For example, cosmetics and scrubs that contain walnut shells or apricot pits, for example, can cause microscopic tears in the skin that can ultimately make dry winter skin look and feel much worse, especially on your face," says Waldorf. Even the brown sugar scrub, she says, can be too harsh for some skin.

Instead, she suggests other type of cosmetics: a cleanser or moisturizer (or both!) containing an alpha-hydroxy or beta-hydroxy acid -- a far safer way, says Waldorf, to rid your skin of those dull, dead cells. If you feel you must try some "mechanical" form of exfoliation, Waldorf suggests gentle cleansing cloths.

"This is as harsh as you should get with the skin on your face, and even the skin on your body, particularly when coming out of the winter season," she says.

Citron agrees and adds a caution concerning the use of home acid peels to recondition skin for spring.

"While some of the milder commercial preparations or cosmetics may be OK, don't try to buy a professional-grade acid peel, like the kind sold over the Internet, and use it on your own -- you have to be very careful and you have to know what kind of cosmetics you are using, or you could end up with some serious problems," says Citron. This includes a condition known as "hyperpigmentation" -- blotchy, uneven, chemically damaged skin.

4 Steps to Renewed Skin

To head into clear weather with your best face forward, Spagnolo says a simple four-step regimen is all most women will really need.

"Cleansing, toning, and moisturizing twice daily, every day, and then adding a facial steam with or without a mask about once weekly is probably one of the easiest ways to ease skin into spring and summer," says Spagnolo.

Waldorf agrees, adding that finding the right cleanser is also key. "You need to know your skin type -- oily, dry, sensitive, acne-prone, or menopausal -- and then choose the right cosmetics and the mildest cleanser you can find in whatever category you fit into," says Waldorf. The same is true, she says, when choosing a masque.

"You just have to know what you want to accomplish -- like tightening pores, reducing oiliness, adding moisture -- and then choose the masque suited for that problem," Waldorf tells us.

In addition, Citron adds that the one thing you should never do to your skin on your own is what doctors call "extraction" -- mechanically removing blackheads or whiteheads from your pores.

"This should only be done by a professional -- trying it on your own can result in scarring and even a possible infection," says Citron.

While any trip to the local drugstore or beauty supply house can net you hundreds of choices for moisturizers, toners, and even facial masques, and other cosmetics, experts offer these at-home recipes for winter-into-spring pampering skin care:

- Brown sugar/olive oil/ginger body scrub: Mix 2 cups of brown sugar with 1 cup of olive oil and add a small amount of ground ginger. Mix well into a paste. Using circular motions, rub your entire body, paying special attention to elbows, heels, and knees. Rinse with a body wash and wet washcloth and towel dry. The result: Softer, suppler, and less dry skin.
- Milk and honey foot treatment: Pour 2 cups of milk per one cup of honey into a basin large enough to hold both feet. Soak for 15 minutes, lightly massaging the mixture into skin. Results: Softer, smoother skin without harsh exfoliation. You can also use the milk/honey combo to soak elbows or hands, or pat gently onto the face and massage in. Always rinse with tepid water.
- Egg white and citrus face masque: (normal to oily skin) -- Mix 2 raw egg whites with 1/4 cup of fresh orange juice. Apply to skin and let rest for 15 minutes until dry. Rinse well with warm water. The result: Tighter pores and a brighter, less dull complexion.
- Oatmeal face masque: (sensitive skin) -- Mix oatmeal with boiling water according to package instructions. Let cool, then apply to skin and let rest for 15 minutes. Rinse well with warm water. The result: A radiant, moisturized glow.

#cosmetics #skin #scrub #moisturizer

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