

Save your skin!

As your skin matures, show it the respect it deserves

Laura Jones

Whether it's our own behaviour — sunbathing, smoking — or whether it's things beyond our control — aging, diminishing sex hormones and genetics — our skin changes over time. During perimenopause, the five or so years before full menopause, a woman's skin noticeably begins to change.

Dr. Benjamin Barankin, a dermatologist and director of the Toronto Dermatology Centre, explains that reduced sex hormones lead to the “breakdown of skin proteins such as collagen and elastin, causing the skin to become loose and wrinkly.” The oil glands also produce less oil, and the skin becomes dried out. Here's his advice for pampering mature skin.

1 | LAY IT ON THICK

“For older skin, moisturizing with thicker creams rather than lotions is imperative,” says Barankin, “especially in the fall and winter when the heating is on and the air is dry.” In the summer, “daily application and periodic reapplication of sunscreens and sunblocks are a must.”

2 | WASH WISELY

“It is also important to wash with a facial cleanser or moisturizing soap rather than ordinary drying soaps,” says Barankin. Less frequent or shorter baths and showers using warm, not hot, water are helpful, too.

3 | SECRET INGREDIENTS

“Adding alpha hydroxyl acids, retinoids or vitamin C-based creams to your nightly skin-care regimen removes dead skin cells faster, leading to a more lustrous complexion,” he says.

4 | TOXINS ARE A GIRL'S BEST FRIEND

Botox — botulinum toxin — injected into facial muscles is beneficial for wrinkles and lines. “These include the horizontal lines on the forehead, frown lines between the eyes



A cosmetician's take

As for cosmetics, here's the advice of Ashleigh McIsaac, a makeup artistry instructor at Concepts School of Cosmetology in Halifax. "For makeup on aging skin, keep it minimal. And moisturizing foundations are a good idea, too." Moisturizing the skin morning and night will help to reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles, she adds. "Tinted cream blush looks better on aging skin since it doesn't settle on the cheeks dustily like a powder. A touch of eyeliner on the top lids will awaken mature eyes." In lipstick, choose softer shades closer to the natural colour of your lips. It will be less obvious if the lipstick bleeds into the lines around your mouth. The darker maroons and reds you can wear when you're younger can look too harsh against older skin.

An accountant's regimen

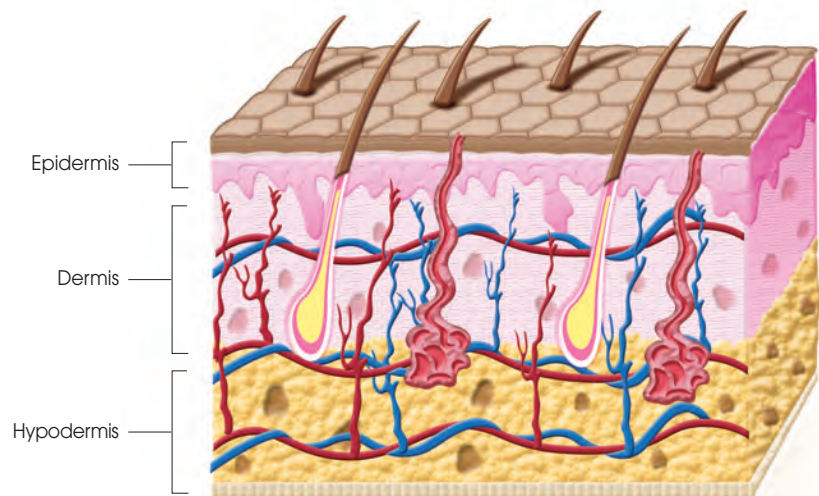
Anne Schofield, 52, an accountant living in Calgary, is scrupulous with figures and equally scrupulous about her skin care. She currently has a gentle peel every six weeks or so. "I used to have a massive peeling, but my skin would keep on peeling for a whole week and I was forced to stay indoors," she says.

Anne notes that in her teenage years she had "super oily skin" and suffered from acne. Now that oil is a blessing because she has fewer wrinkles than other women her age. Still, she admits that the skin around her eyes is thinner. Anne religiously applies a sunscreen every day and a retinol-based serum every other night. And she mixes a vitamin C powder into her daily skin serum. Anne also recommends a healthy diet and exercise for skin maintenance. "Skin care is way more work now than it was in my 20s, but I think it's worth it," she says.

and lines around the eyes, and also the lines at the corners of the mouth and those radiating up from the lips, which cause lipstick to bleed," says Barankin. The improvement lasts from three to six months.

5 | JELLY GOOD

Another option is gel fillers. They're composed of hyaluronic acid, which can be injected into the skin or lips to add a fullness that lasts for five to 12 months.



THE LAYERED LOOK

The outer skin layer, the epidermis, has dead skin cells on the surface and new cells at the bottom. It's waterproof and contains nerve endings, pigmentation cells and protective immune cells. The middle layer, or dermis, consists of living cells, with proteins such as collagen for strength, reticular fibres for support and elastin for flexibility. The deepest and thickest layer, the hypodermis, stores fat and supplies energy and insulation.

6 | TAKING OFF THE TOP LAYER

"Dermabrasion and laser resurfacing can dramatically improve the pigmentation problems of aging skin, as well as improve fine and even some deep lines," says Barankin. Dermabrasion, a surgical procedure requiring the use of an anaesthetic, can treat deeper skin. Microdermabrasion uses a spray of fine crystals to remove dry, dead surface skin cells. "It is less invasive and requires many more treatments but it involves less downtime than dermabrasion," he says.

7 | A-PEELING COMPLEXIONS

Chemical peels, Barankin adds, similarly improve hyperpigmentation, texture and tone and also reduce fine lines.

Dermatologist's Picks

Mature skin is quite dry, so Toronto-based dermatologist Dr. Benjamin Barankin recommends the following lines of cleansers and moisturizers for older women.

Cleansing

- Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser
- Dove Sensitive Skin Beauty Bar
- Spectroderm Dry Skin
- Toleriane Dermo Cleanser

Moisturizing

- (night, no sunscreen)
- Eluage Cream
 - Impruv Deep Moisturizing Lotion
 - Olay Complete Night Fortifying Moisture Cream
 - Toleriane Riche Cream