

skin & beauty

5 Beauty Tips and Secrets Every Woman Should Know

Here are 5 indispensable beauty tips that can help you look fabulous at every age.

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WebMD Feature

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Standing tall, feeling confident, believing in yourself -- these are all important ways to feel your best. But as any woman who's ever stood in front of a mirror can tell you, beauty secrets count too!

While the way we look may be only one part of who we are, it *is* still a part of us. And feeling that you look your best can be a real confidence booster.

Looking your best doesn't have to be complicated or expensive, either. Experts say most of us really only need to pay attention to a few basic beauty secrets -- essentials that can help you look and feel great without spending a lot of time or money.

To help you find the beauty tips that really work, WebMD talked to top skin care and beauty experts, who parted with their personal tips for looking great:

Beauty Tip 1: Never Underestimate the Power of Moisturizer

Whether your skin is dry, normal, or even oily, if you can only afford one skin care product, experts say, your dollars will be well spent on a good moisturizer.

"Sometimes, all you really need is a good moisturizer and a mild cleanser, and you can take years off your face," says New York University professor Rhoda Narins, MD, president of the American Society of Dermatologic Surgery. When skin is dry, says Narins, every wrinkle is accentuated, making you look older.

If you're in your 20s or 30s, doctors say, moisturizers will give you some of the protection you need to keep skin from prematurely aging.

"In your 20s and early 30s, a good moisturizer can take the place of a lot of products," says Park Avenue plastic surgeon Darrick Antell, MD.

So what exactly is a "good" moisturizer? Dermatologist Charles E. Crutchfield III, MD, describes it this way: "It's a product that will do anything from gently adding moisture, to sealing in the moisture you've achieved, to helping your skin produce more moisture -- and which type you choose should be based on your skin's individual needs."

If skin is normal to dry, look for moisturizers containing alpha hydroxy acids. They can help skin produce more moisture on its own, Crutchfield says. Such products include Neutrogena Advanced Solutions Daily Moisturizer and Anew Advanced All In One Cream by Avon.

Products such as AmLactin XL -- the over-the-counter version of the prescription cream Lac-Hydrin -- not only contain alpha hydroxy acids, but also a new ceramide technology to seal in moisture.

"You put on when your skin is slightly damp, and it locks in all the water," says Crutchfield, an associate clinical professor of dermatology at the University of Minnesota Medical School.

If skin is very dry, he also suggests products using a technology called vesicular emulsion.

"This technology uses microscopic spheres that are alternating layers of moisture and water that slowly release throughout the day, so you get continual moisturization," says Crutchfield. Products using this type of technology include Atopalm and Curel.

If skin is oily, look for a light, gentle moisturizer – but don't skip this step, cautions Crutchfield.

"Oil is not moisture, and even if you have excess oil you still need moisture," he says. Recommended products include Aveeno with Colloidal Oatmeal, Vanicream Light, Neutrogena Oil-Free Moisturizer, or Cetaphil Moisturizer.

Beauty Tip 2: Sunscreen Is Your Best Antiaging Product.

Before you see the plastic surgeon, before you plunk down half a paycheck on that pricey anti-aging cream, in fact, before you do anything, put on sunscreen.

While most of us know it reduces the risk of skin cancer, did you also know it's an amazing beauty secret that can help keep skin looking young?

The reason, say experts, is that when sunscreen blocks out the sun's damaging rays, it also blocks their aging effects.

"The sun impacts collagen production in the skin, and without collagen, skin won't naturally maintain that plump, moist, youthful, wrinkle-free look," says Antell. Get enough sun exposure, he says, and skin will wrinkle long before its time.

Without the protection of sunscreen, just a few minutes of daily sun exposure over the years can cause noticeable changes in how skin looks and feels, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

Not only will you see more wrinkles and fine lines, but also more freckles, age spots, and spider veins. Skin itself can look rough and leathery or loose and slack – all thanks to the sun.

Sunscreen can protect your skin from these damaging rays, so that even if you do spend time outdoors, your face is less likely to give away your age.

Crutchfield advises choosing a sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher. Because sun breaks down its effectiveness over time, if you're going to be in direct sunlight for an extended period, reapply every hour or two.

For longer-lasting results, he recommends Melashade, a sunscreen using new technology that remains in force hours longer than most other products.

Another option: Use your regular sunscreen before putting on makeup (it should go on first, before anything). Then, for touch-ups, use a light, translucent mineral powder to add extra protection throughout the day.

"These powders contain a natural sunscreen, and since they generally don't build up on the skin you can keep adding protection all day long," says Crutchfield. Products include Glo Minerals Powder, Neutrogena Healthy Defense Protective Powder, and BareEscentuals Mineral Veil.

Beauty Tip 3: Choose Your Cleanser Wisely

If you're a "soap and water" girl (or guy), you may want to rethink your cleansing strategy. Dermatologists say that one of the best beauty tips around is to use the gentlest cleanser you can find – and use it sparingly.

"While the temptation may be great to wash your face several times a day (or more if skin is oily), not only will over-cleansing not help you, if you're using a harsh product -- particularly soap -- you could be harming your skin," says Crutchfield.

Wash your face too often – more than twice a day – and you can damage the natural lipid barrier, the protective mantle of lubrication that keeps skin looking and feeling healthy.

"Once that protection is lost, and the integrity of the skin barrier disrupted, skin becomes dry – which means it can crack, peel, itch, burn, sting, or any combination," says Crutchfield. It also means you can look older than your years.

The solution: Wash skin no more than twice a day and choose your cleanser wisely. Crutchfield's three top favorites: Dove Unscented Bar, Cetaphil, and Vanicream Cleanser.

Beauty Tip 4: Use the Right Tools for the Right Job

You can have the best eyeshadow money can buy, the world's most luxurious foundation, a bronzer straight from the cosmetic bag of a supermodel. But if you don't have the right tools to apply them, their benefits will be lost. That's the advice of Smashbox Cosmetic's director of global artistry, Holly Mordini.

"Using the right brushes, the right application tools – it's key to making the products go on the way they are intended and to give you the look that you want. For a professional makeup artist, the tools are as important as the products," says Mordini, who has painted and puffed some of Hollywood's most famous faces.

What constitutes the "right" tools? Brushes should be soft and feel gentle on the skin, but also have substance so the product can be moved to the surface of your skin. If you dip a brush in shadow or blush and the color falls off before you make it to your face, that's a bad brush, experts say.

If you don't know what to buy, you can't go wrong if you purchase the tools sold with a high-quality beauty line, Mordini says. Most, she says, are created to give your application a professional touch and to work best with each product in the line.

"It also makes putting on makeup incredibly easy, plus it's often what sets apart women who have the 'professional makeup look' and those that don't," she says.

Beauty Tip 5: Update Hair and Makeup Every 2 Years

If you walk into your high school reunion and hear a chorus of "You haven't changed a bit," run, run, RUN to the nearest beauty salon!

Experts say that if you can't even remember the last time you changed your hair and makeup, it's way overdue.

"Ideally, your image, including hair and makeup, should be updated at least every two years – and sooner if the styles change dramatically," says Beverly Hills hair expert and QVC personality Nick Chavez.

By keeping your look current, says Chavez, you also look younger and more modern. "Nothing dates a woman more than outdated hair and makeup," says Chavez.

If it's been a while since you've had a change, visit the makeup counters at your favorite department or beauty store, and don't be afraid to ask for help. Most of the better lines are sold by makeup artists who can quickly catch you up on what's new.

To find the best new hairstyle without commitment, try wig shopping! It's a fun, fast, and easy way to try on styles and even colors before making a hair appointment.

Published January 2007.

Colette Bouchez is the author of *Your Perfectly Pampered Menopause: Health, Beauty and Lifestyle Advice for the Best Years of Your Life*.

WebMD Feature

SOURCES: American Academy of Dermatology's SkinNet: "Causes of Aging Skin." American Academy of Dermatology web site: "Skin care and Cleansing." Bouchez, C. *Your Perfectly Pampered Menopause*, Broadway Books/Random House. Rhoda Narins, MD, president, American Society of Dermatologic Surgery; clinical professor of dermatology, New York University Medical School. Charles E. Crutchfield III, MD, clinical associate professor of dermatology, University of Minnesota Medical School; director, Crutchfield Dermatology.com. Darrick Antell, MD, plastic surgeon, New York. Holly Mordini, director of global artistry, Smashbox Cosmetics, Hollywood, Calif. Nick Chavez, salon owner; author, *Perfect Hair Every Day*. QVC.

Reviewed on January 13, 2007

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