

Anti-aging Skin Care: Revealing True Beauty

By Myong Chong

The body has an amazing capacity to heal and rejuvenate itself—and the skin is no exception. As the largest organ, the skin readily benefits from the same nutrients that nourish the body as a whole. A multivitamin approach to health and beauty can promote tissue growth, repair damaged skin and provide added protection against environmental toxins. As consumers continue to focus on natural solutions to common beauty concerns in 2003, skin care experts expect trends to reflect a renewed emphasis on products formulated to correct, rather than conceal.

Simply labeling a product as natural, organic or botanical may have been enough to get consumers' attention five years ago, but in the months ahead, the skin care solutions everyone will be talking about are those that best leverage the healing potential of nature's most powerful ingredients.

Certain vitamins, essences and moisturizers are effective weapons against everything from harmful UV rays to damaging free radicals—something industry experts have known for quite some time.

But there's a catch.

In order to be effective, these nutrients must be first absorbed by the skin, not simply applied

topically. And, until recently, few skin care products were designed to penetrate beyond the dead and dying cells of the outer layers of skin. This is where the advanced science of the industry's next generation of skin care comes in. The best part is that these products are available right now.

Clean and simple

The key is to treat the skin deep below the surface, to restore pH balance and hydrate tissues. In recent years, prominent physicians in Japan and throughout the Pacific Rim have begun to sing the praises of vitamin-based products that deliver nutrients into the skin. Now, the United States is finally seeing simple one-step products with the natural chemistry to make it happen.

A thorough cleansing remains the all-important first step of any skin care regimen. Makeup, dirt and environmental pollutants can clog pores and lessen the effectiveness of topical nutrients, so it's critical to use a product that not only deep-cleans to remove makeup and impurities but also keeps skin soft and supple. These advanced all-in-one cleansers are available now in the United States, serving as a vital starting point for an anti-aging regimen.

The hydration and light massage of a daily cleansing stimulates blood circulation, which in turn improves both the texture

and color of the skin. Even the bone structure becomes more prominent as the skin's appearance improves, revealing natural-born beauty.

Although there are lotions, creams, serums and extracts formulated for just about any imaginable skin problem, aging is a complex process. Until the true culprits are targeted, identifying a solution can be a hit-or-miss proposition.

When identifying the causes of aging skin, it isn't just a time element that must be considered. Other factors also come into play, such as nutrition, stress and environmental damage. Identifying the cause of damage will make it easier to create a plan of attack—both from a consumer and product development standpoint.

Turn back the sundial

First, the bad news: an estimated 90% of the skin damage associated with aging is attributable directly to UV exposure. Now, for the good news: a majority of the sun's damage can be prevented, and even reversed. In the coming year, men and women will be able to choose from an increasingly wide selection of natural products designed specifically to combat sun damage.

When choosing products to fight photo-aging, consumers should look for vitamins A, B, C, D and E. Of these ingredients,

vitamins B, C and D play especially important roles in fighting sun-related aging.

Topically applied vitamin B has a dramatic impact on the skin's ability to handle the stresses of moderate sun exposure. It is an anti-inflammatory, which minimizes redness, constricts pores and strengthens capillary walls. It also stimulates the skin and regenerates DNA.

Topical vitamin C is a powerhouse when it comes to offsetting the damaging effects of the sun. It protects the skin from UVA and UVB rays, improves the immune system, stimulates the production of collagen and contains high levels of antioxidants, which reduce or neutralize free radical damage.

Vitamin D is another topically applied substance that helps preserve a youthful complexion. In contrast to vitamins B and C, however, vitamin D works as a supplement rather than a shield. Because the sun is a natural source of vitamin D, physicians highly recommend that people enjoy 20 minutes of sunlight per day, but only in the hours before 10 am. Since busy lifestyles rarely permit consumers to adopt a regular schedule of morning sunlight therapy, however, a product that can supplement the natural absorption of vitamin D is needed. These products are now available

and have been shown to promote a healthy complexion.

The nutrients are powerful allies in the fight to preserve youthful skin, defying the signs of aging. Yet, despite industry advances incorporating these effective ingredients, the best defense against sun-related aging is to use good sense—and a good sunscreen—while enjoying the great outdoors.

Most important: avoid tanning. A tan is not a “healthy glow.” In fact, added exposure to harmful UVA and UVB rays—whether through natural sunlight or a tanning bed—not only accelerates the aging process, it can be life threatening. Skin cancer rates have reached epidemic proportions in the United States, with more than one million new cases each year. Rather than risk the serious consequences of tanning, opt instead for the natural glow that comes from good nutrition, exercise and emotional balance.

To stay looking good in 2003, follow these sun-smart recommendations:

- Avoid tanning beds. The UV exposure is 20 times stronger than that of the sun.
- Don't be fooled by overcast days. UV damage occurs even when the sky is cloudy.
- Stick to SPF 30. Higher SPFs are not recognized by the Food and Drug Administration, and

a higher SPF may cause more irritation to the skin.

Stress: A detriment to skin

While it's true that many in the United States are beginning to reassess their demanding careers and cut back on outside obligations, society as a whole is still hopelessly high-strung. The fast-paced lifestyle many lead can be stressful. Unfortunately, the body responds to this stress with physical, neural and hormonal changes that have harmful—even deadly—effects on health. It's no wonder that stress also takes its toll on appearance, making some look older than they are.

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When worried, anxious or struggling with painful emotional issues, it's more of a struggle for the body to maintain a beautiful outward appearance. By reducing stress, the body's ability to repair and renew its tissues is increased. Steps can be taken to help reduce stress and enhance overall well-being:

- Exercise regularly. Physical activity is a powerful stress-reliever.
- Have regular massages. The healing touch stimulates circulation as it aids in relaxation.

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- Indulge in a professional facial. It will make you feel relaxed and pampered, and you'll notice a difference in your skin right away.
- Don't neglect your spiritual side. A peaceful mind is better equipped to handle difficult situations in a positive way.
- Get plenty of rest. Much of the body's natural rejuvenation takes place as you sleep. A well-rested person also is less likely to become easily stressed.

In addition to the systemic changes brought on by mental and emotional factors, physical stressors such as pregnancy, facelifts, laser surgeries and chemical peels can dramatically affect skin elasticity, pigmentation, moisture and texture. In these cases, practice a strict skin care regimen prior to—and following—the stress to lessen trauma to the skin.

A healthful diet

Most often, the word “diet” is mentioned in conjunction with weight loss. However, in 2003, expect the emphasis on “diet” to center on overall health and nutrition.

“... but the emphasis is on smooth, glowing skin.”

Healthful foods—and plenty of water—provide essential building blocks the body needs to grow new

tissue, repair damaged tissue, reduce inflammation, control allergies, protect itself against toxic substances and minimize harmful cross-linking caused by free radicals.

Men and women should enhance their skin care regimens by eating a balanced diet. This way, the skin has the benefit of proper nutrients fueling its growth from the inside, while topical applications of vitamin-rich solutions penetrate the skin from the outside. Follow these tips to keep a healthy body and complexion:

- If losing weight is the main goal, don't starve yourself. The lack of nutrients will show in the face.
- Limit intake of caffeine, alcohol, sugar and salt. These substances are guilty of inducing a host of fluctuations, ranging from sleeplessness to water retention, that the skin has a difficult time handling.
- Cut back on spicy foods if you have sensitive skin. Too much of certain spices can exacerbate skin problems.

Revealing true beauty

For better or worse, the beauty industry has gained quite a reputation for cosmetic camouflage over the years: concealing blemishes, covering wrinkles and disguising imperfections. It's clear that the industry is focusing less on

creating an illusion of beauty and more on protecting and preserving natural-born beauty. Makeup will still be popular for enhancing facial features and adding a touch of drama, of course, but at the heart of the industry, the emphasis is on smooth, glowing skin.

The products that will succeed in the coming years are those that represent the three Ns: nourishing, nurturing and natural. When skin is healthy and vibrant, it is natural to feel more beautiful and desirable, projecting a positive energy to the world around you. There's no miracle in a bottle, but there are some truly amazing products out there will receive more coverage throughout 2003. The miracle is what happens when you use what's in the bottle to nourish the skin and nurture its ability to heal and protect itself. PMPR

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