

Are you a tried and true beauty junkie? If your bathroom shelves are overflowing with jars, bottles, and tubes, you're not alone. Most women actually buy over three times more cosmetics than they could ever use in a lifetime. We tend to have a short attention span for our skin care; we use it twice and forget about it. We all want instant effects and aren't willing to put the time into a product or regime to really give it a fair shake.

Whether your skin is in great shape and you want to preserve it, or you have uneven pigmentation, fine lines, enlarged pores, sagging or wrinkles, you have the ability to maintain or improve the health and vitality of your skin. The basis for an anti-aging plan to rejuvenate and tone your complexion should start with a customized regimen of active topical ingredients.

Today's highly informed consumers want more than just a garden variety moisturizer. They want products that work fast and are reliable, look and feel good and last well. Along with function and performance, the sensory and emotional benefits of a product must complete the package to entice them. Many scientifically advanced creams absolutely work, but in a limited capacity; they can only get you so far. The main reason women are often dissatisfied with their skin care is that their expectations are off the charts to begin with. There is no facelift in a jar or filler in a bottle or toxin in a tube. Most cosmetic products use a relatively smaller concentration of the effective ingredients so that skin irritations are minimized and they cannot do much if your skin is in need of something more aggressive. Skin care is the place to start, to lay a foundation for your beauty future; but eventually, over-the-counter products won't be enough. Then it may become time to move from creams to needles, lasers and possibly surgery.

Recent technological advancements have allowed researchers to develop products that target more specific

skin concerns and needs such as acne, rosacea and redness, and hyperpigmentation or discoloration. As Dermatologist Dr. Judith Hellman says, "There is no 'best' product. Since everyone's skin is different, the results of using any product vary depending on whether they are concerned about wrinkles, discoloration or redness. My recommendation might include a combination regimen of products containing retinol, peptides or antioxidants. Most people need to use a carefully selected group of products that address their skin type and needs most effectively."

Facial aging involves more than just the skin. Your muscles get lazy, skin begins to sag, soft tissue breaks down, and fat deposits accumulate. Anti-aging topical work well on fine

lines, pigment and texture, but may fall short when it comes to deep creases and a slackening jawline. You have to be realistic — if you are expecting any cream to put an end to your double chin or hanging eyelids, you are destined to be disappointed.

Cosmeceuticals are loosely defined as products that combine the benefits of a cosmetic and a pharmaceutical. Despite the medical connotation, cosmeceuticals are largely unregulated and their claims are unsubstantiated. Since they are not considered drugs, the FDA does not regulate them unless they cross the line and make functional or drug claims. In fact, independent clinical studies are still few and far between, but the pendulum is swinging. Even smaller brands are starting to make a significant investment to provide evidence to back up their promises. Look for brands that stand behind their science and make claims that can be substantiated in the lab.

Cosmeceuticals can be considered either preventative or reparative. For example, sunscreen is preventative, whereas peptides are reparative. Antioxidants are considered the most preventative type of skincare agents other than sunblocks.

Increasing awareness of the potential dangers of overexposure to UV rays has been heightened by consumer awareness campaigns. The Skin Cancer Foundation (www.skincancer.org) grants its prized International Seal of Recommendation to products that meet the Foundation's criteria for effective UV sun protection products.

does not produce as much irritation. The proven anti-aging benefits of retinol include a reduction in the appearance of lines and wrinkles, hyperpigmentation, signs of photo damage and pore size. The increased skin exfoliation of vitamin A helps unclog pores and can also reduce acne flare-ups.

THE POWER OF PEPTIDES

Peptides are fragments of proteins that have a variety of effects on cellular function. Many cosmeceutical formulas include both synthetic and naturally occurring peptides, which have been proven to have reverse aging and sun damaged skin. Peptides may act as carrier agents to deliver other ingredients – such as copper – into the skin, which can boost collagen production and slow its breakdown of collagen. Some peptides stimulate skin metabolism and repair. They can also inhibit neuromuscular transmissions, which can mimic the effects of wrinkle relaxing injections on the skin. The most common peptides found in topical skin care products include acetyl hexapeptide-3, or Argireline®, which can help decrease muscle movement, thus improving dynamic wrinkles. Palmitoyl pentapeptide-3, also called Matrixyl®, can be found in Olay Regenerist® and DDF Wrinkle Relax™.



The newest peptide, Lumixyl™, developed by Stanford University dermatological researchers to address mild to moderate hyperpigmentation and uneven skin tone. Lumixyl™ joins the growing category of skin brightening agents, such as licorice, mulberry, kojic acid and arbutin that can enhance clarity and boost radiance without some of the potential side effects of hydroquinone. According to Dermatologist Dr. Neil Sadick, "With continued use and diligent sun protection, Lumixyl™ skin brightening peptide cream can be effective to uniformly reduce superficial pigmentation."



VITAMIN C

Vitamin C can take many forms, but is limited mainly by the challenge of stabilizing this potent antioxidant. When exposed to air or light, Vitamin C undergoes oxidation, which makes it turn brown and become ineffective. Therefore, proper storage is critical to prolong its shelf life. Vitamin C, contained in The Obagi Professional-C Serums range, is necessary for the production of collagen, and to be effective, sufficient amounts of L-ascorbic acid need to be present. Ascorbyl palmitate and Magnesium ascorbyl phosphate are two of the most widely used forms of vitamin C in skincare products.

ANTIOXIDANT ADVANTAGES

Some of the newest cosmeceuticals are derived from botanical extracts, leaves, bark and plants that are rich in potent antioxidants. Antioxidants protect oxygen molecules created by ultraviolet (UV) radiation from causing damage to our DNA. An abundance of antioxidants are used as ingredients in skin care formulations including lycopene, grape seed extract, resveratrol, green tea, coenzyme Q10, licorice root, pomegranates, blueberries, lipoic acid and many more. Each of these offers distinct advantages. Antioxidants applied topically reduce free radical damage, thus helping to prevent cellular damage and collagen

destruction due to inflammation that comes with age. Researchers believe that antioxidants are more effective for skin when used in combination because they work in tandem to enhance their potency; for example vitamin C may work better combined with vitamin E, also called Tocopherol.

"Oral and topical antioxidants should be an essential part of every anti-aging skincare regimen and a combination of several types of antioxidants is preferred," says Dr. Hellman.

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