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## Women's Skin Care for Your Face

### What to buy for a healthy, glowing face.

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WebMD Feature

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There are thousands of anti-aging creams, moisturizers, lotions serums, exfoliators, and cleansers available.

You can spend hundreds of dollars on luxury brands, or just a few dollars at the drugstore. The truth? Many inexpensive drugstore brands work just as well as the luxury brands, dermatologists say, because they contain many of the same ingredients. Which ingredients should you look for? Here are tips from skin care experts.

#### Bar Soap or Liquid Cleansers for Women

Most bar soaps are too harsh to use on your face because they contain ingredients that may irritate and dry the skin. Liquid facial cleansers or foaming products are less harsh. Some even moisturize your face as they clean.

Amy Derick, MD, an aesthetic dermatologist in Barrington, Ill., advises women to use a liquid facial cleanser containing ceramides, lipids that help skin retain moisture.

If you insist on bar soap, avoid soaps with sodium lauryl sulfate, which can dry skin. Instead, look for moisturizing soaps with ingredients such as glycerin, and plant-based oils.

If you have oily skin or acne, use a cleanser containing salicylic acid, which removes dead cells from skin or benzoyl peroxide, which helps unclog pores. This may prevent further breakouts, too.

#### Anti-Aging Creams for Women

How do retinoids and over-the-counter moisturizers and serums that contain retinoids help diminish signs of aging? They increase cell turnover and may build collagen, according to Jeffrey Dover, MD, an associate clinical professor of dermatology at Yale University School of Medicine. Another compound, GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid), a neurotransmitter, seems to work at the nerve level to relax wrinkles temporarily.

Look for creams containing retinyl propionate or retinol, which are found in the skin as vitamin A derivatives.

Look for new ingredients such as peptides and sirtuin, a protein, to help smooth uneven texture and improve skin's elasticity.

Look for the terms PAL KTTS, copper peptides, and palmitoyl oligopeptide on the ingredient list of anti-aging creams.

#### Moisturizers for Women

Women's facial skin is constantly exposed to air and pollutants, which rob skin of moisture. Old-fashioned petroleum jelly has been used for decades as an inexpensive moisturizer. It works by sealing in moisture, but it's greasy and heavy. Moisturizers with emollients and humectants hydrate the skin without the greasy effect. Humectants help retain moisture. Emollients help soften and soothe skin. Together, they can also temporarily minimize fine lines around the eye or on the neck.

Many of today's skincare products both moisturize and provide anti-aging benefits, says Doris Day, MD, clinical assistant professor of dermatology at New York University Medical Center.

Look for creams that contain glycerin and hyaluronic acid, which plumps the skin temporarily, minimizing the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

#### Exfoliating Scrubs and Lotions for Women

Ingredients in moisturizers and serums must penetrate the stratum corneum (the skin's outmost layer), to work

effectively. An exfoliator used twice a week will help slough off dead skin cells, allowing creams to penetrate. They also help make skin appear smoother and less blotchy. Some all-in-one skin cleansers and exfoliators are gentle enough to be used every day.

For an effective but gentle exfoliator, look for products containing glycolic acid, lactic acid, salicylic acid, or malic acid.

### **Antioxidant Creams for Women**

Many creams today contain antioxidants, which help prevent free radicals from damaging cells. Some of the creams claim to diminish wrinkles, sallowness, and other signs of sun damage. But there are very few scientific studies that prove they really work as claimed.

If you want to try antioxidant face creams, look for products containing niacinamide, which is both an anti-inflammatory and an antioxidant, or the antioxidants coenzyme Q10, coffee berry extract, and soy extract. These ingredients may help reduce the signs of sun damage, says Robin Ashinoff, MD, a professor of dermatology at New York University's Langone Medical Center.

### **Skin Lightening for Women**

Over-the-counter creams containing licorice extract or kojic acid, a fungal ingredient, may lighten those unsightly "age spots" that crop up on the face and neck, but they won't get rid of the spots completely, says dermatologist Ashinoff.

She recommends that women who want to lighten spots on their face look for a cream that contains hydroquinone, which has been proven effective in lightening skin.

### **Sun Protection for Women**

About 80% of visible skin changes attributed to aging are caused by exposure to ultraviolet light. Preventing sun damage is the single most important thing you can do for your face.

Many facial moisturizers and creams contain broad-spectrum sunscreens that block UVA and UVB rays. Look for an SPF of 15 in your regular facial creams. If you play sports or spend a lot of time at the beach or outdoors, purchase a separate sunscreen for your face with an SPF factor of at least 30.

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