

Good Housekeeping

Goodlooks

# Wash away years

Can you help prevent wrinkles at your bathroom sink? In his new book, *Absolute*

*Beauty*, top plastic surgeon Dr. Gerald Imber says yes—if you treat your face the right way.

## Whether we're 25 or 65,

we all want to look our best. But no matter how much we wish it wasn't so, each day brings tiny changes that chip away at our youth and beauty. Based on my 25 years as a plastic surgeon in New York City, I can tell you this: You can't stop yourself from getting older, but you can do more to protect and maintain the good looks you have now. Start tonight—all you have to do is wash your face. ►





# Before you go to bed

## 6 nighttime steps that will change your skin

### 1 Wash with soap and water.

This isn't heresy; it's common sense. Yes, a few people have skin that's genuinely irritated by soap and water. If you're one of them, just make sure you use a "super-fatted" facial soap that's extra moisturizing. Whatever your skin type, the goal is to remove all the oil, grit, cosmetics, and environmental debris that accumulate daily on the surface of your skin—and a rich soap is still the best way to do that.

**What kind to use** A bar is fine, or if you prefer, try a cleanser in gel or liquid form. Whatever you choose should be unscented and gentle; it should also lather well in your local water and wash off without leaving residue. Two brands that usually work well: Basis and Dove.

**How to wash** For 30 seconds, gently rub the lather over your face and neck. Don't forget your eyelids.

### 2 Rinse.

Use lots of water—not hot but warm (to dilate your veins, which will increase blood flow).

### 3 Lather again.

This time, follow the warm rinse with a refreshing round of cold water. That will close down the blood vessels and help to firm up the skin.



### 4 Towel-dry your face.

This helps remove heaped-up dead cells and allows healthy young cells to reach the surface. Towel upward, against the pull of gravity. Be brisk but gentle; the towel will do a great job with almost no pressure. Your face may glow briefly from the exfoliation, but don't worry, you're helping your skin, not hurting it.

### 5 Apply protective products.

We all need some combination of moisturizer and antioxidants (such as vitamins C and E, soy, or green tea; each repairs skin and protects it from pollutants and ultraviolet rays). Simplify the application process by

choosing a moisturizer with antioxidants.

Then apply one of several "treatment products," which actually penetrate the skin and make real changes to its surface. The "treatment" is what takes this cleansing regimen beyond the old soap-and-water routine your grandmother might have followed.

**Which treatment product to use** Your choice will depend on how serious your skin problems are. And since these products

have real effects—for example, they all partially remove at least one layer of skin—you should seek advice from a dermatologist or a plastic surgeon. But here's an overview.

If your problems are minor—a few fine lines, some blotching, enlarged pores—consider an over-the-counter (OTC) moisturizer that contains alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs).

The next step up among treatment products is a group of vitamin A derivatives that come in various strengths, from OTC to prescription. Which is right for you? If your lines are still fine, try an OTC product with retinol. For more severe wrinkles, talk to your doctor about the prescription drugs Retin-A and the more moisturizing Renova. Both improve skin by ►



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stimulating cell turnover and collagen production. There's also evidence that they can prevent or reverse a certain amount of sun damage. Not everyone's skin responds well to Retin-A and Renova (both are essentially irritating), but they hold a lot of promise for tolerant skin.

**Where to apply** Retin-A and Renova should be used on specific trouble spots, as directed by your doctor. But all other treatments should be applied to your entire face.

### 6 Moisturize.

If you have used a treatment product, this step is essential. And even if you've already applied a moisturizer that contains an AHA, finishing up with a moisturizer will seal in everything else you've applied.

### When you wake up

In the morning, perform the steps above, with one exception: Instead of applying a night treatment like Renova, use sunscreen. ■



## Why moisturizer matters

Want your face to look smooth and healthy rather than dry and scaly? Then you need to trap as much moisture as possible in that layer of dead cells on the surface of your skin. Natural oils are the best sealants, but if your skin doesn't produce enough, a moisturizer is the next best thing. Could manufacturers come up with one that's as potent as natural oils? Yes, but it would end up feeling as inelegant as Crisco—which I suspect is not on your list of pleasant things to put on your face.

## What you can fix **without** plastic surgery...

You'd be surprised by how much better problem spots like these can look if you work at them (with cosmetics, OTC products, and in-office procedures like lasers, chemical peels, fat transfers, microsuction, and injections of Botox or fillers like Restylane and Hylaform):

- Dark undereye circles ● Fine wrinkles under the eyes
- Smile lines around the eyes ● Dry or blotchy skin
- Oily, irregular skin ● Discoloration or pigmentation
- Lines like parentheses at the corners of the mouth
- Vertical frown lines between eyebrows ● Lines above the upper lip
- Fine wrinkles on the cheeks ● Slight fullness along the jawline
- Double chin ● Defined

nasolabial line (from your nose to the corner of your mouth) ● Nasolabial line etched into skin

### WHEN SURGERY IS THE ONLY SOLUTION

Don't let anyone kid you—for these you will need the phone number of a good plastic surgeon:

- Excess eyelid skin ● Puffiness or deep undereye circles
- Deep vertical frown lines between eyebrows
- Jowls hanging over the jawline ● Hanging skin and deep facial wrinkles
- Very loose neck skin ● Loss of cheek fullness
- Nasolabial fold (a deeper, more severe version of the nasolabial line) etched into skin