



BACK TO SKINCARE SCHOOL

Stuck in a dull, lacklustre post-summer skin rut? This is the perfect time to study the latest skincare syllabus

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Whether yours consists of a quick cleanse-and-go or the diligent layering of multiple serums, there's something resolutely personal about your skincare routine. In fact, it's so innate, so individual a ritual, that your approach is ingrained before you've even had the chance to dunk your pre-teen fingers into a pot of Nivea.

As a child, watching your mother cleanse her skin or dot on her eye cream had more of an effect on you than you might have realised at the time. Consciously or not, we soak up those rituals in our early years and they follow us through our adult lives.

"Scent comes into the mix, too," believes psychologist Suzy Reading. "The association with the presence of our mothers is comforting and reassuring, like the smell of home." If the herbaceous aroma of Liz Earle's Cleanse & Polish is enough to transport you back to a fond childhood memory, it becomes clear why you haven't deviated since your teens.

Of course, we dabble in buzzy new products but, as creatures of habit, we're reluctant to divert too much from what we know.

Skincare products often require persistent use over time before you see any effects and, for this reason, many of us are inclined to stick with what we know rather than risk a new cream that may or may not work.

"OVER TIME, USING INCORRECT PRODUCTS CAN CAUSE ISSUES LIKE SENSITIVITY AND CONGESTION, SO YOU NEED TO ASSESS YOUR SKIN REGULARLY"

BEAUTY



"I believed pollution was affecting my skin"

Sarah Lakes, 28, Stylist's social media editor, moved to the UK from Australia and her routine went AWOL. She spoke to Dr Justine Kluk on London's Harley Street (@justinekluk.com)

"My skin has always been normal and low-maintenance but, when I moved to London 18 months ago, I blamed new breakouts around my mouth and forehead on the pollution. In the morning, I applied Clinique moisturiser with SPF 30 and make-up straight onto my uncleansed skin. If my face looked dull at the end of a long week, I'd do an elaborate DIY facial with various clay and hydrating masks."

I spoke with Dr Justine Kluk over FaceTime so, without her being able to inspect my skin in person, she asked a lot of questions about my lifestyle, health and family history. I had a huge lightbulb moment about my mystery breakouts. I was vehemently blaming London's pollution – yet, before I moved, I swapped my usual contraception for a hormonal IUD. Dr Kluk said she sees this a lot with women who change their birth control method and, although harder to manage (as it's all down to hormones), a consistent skincare routine would help. She was surprised (read: disappointed) to hear I wasn't cleansing in the morning. And when I spoke to her about the dullness of my skin, she said it was time to up the anti-ageing ingredients in my skincare. This included retinol, antioxidants and an SPF 50 applied daily.

My new routine starts with cleansing, both morning and night. I remove make-up and dirt with micellar water and then follow up with a cream cleanser. Each morning, I use an anti-pollution serum, azelaic acid (an anti-inflammatory that helps to ease breakouts and heal scarring) and an SPF 50 gel. Dr Kluk also recommended a brilliant Vichy lightweight foundation, which is non-comedogenic so won't block my pores, and has been a make-up game changer as I used to wear heavy foundation six days a week. Every other night in the evenings, I use a retinol serum after cleansing – I'm slowly building up my skin's tolerance to it. My complexion already looks brighter, with a much more consistent texture.

I do still have a few spots but I'm told that they're to be expected while my skin settles into its new routine."



THE TIPS TO PASS ON

- ◆ Cleanse in the morning – pillows are covered in dust and sweat.
- ◆ A regular routine shouldn't be overlooked. Skin likes – and responds to – consistency.
- ◆ If you're prone to breakouts, check that your make-up is non-comedogenic (non-pore blocking).



"I thought oils and moisturisers were key"

Hannah Keegan, 23, Stylist's features writer, believed that heavy moisturisers and oils would soothe her dry skin. She visited Dr Stefanie Williams at Eudelo (@eudelo.com)

"I've always had dry skin so, even though I kept my routine pretty basic, I clattered on heavy creams and oils every night – fearful I'd wake up with tight, chalky skin without them. As a result, I'd get breakouts. It was a catch-22 situation."

Dr Williams used a facial-scanning device that resembles a small washing machine to analyse my skin. It measures texture, wrinkling, redness, invisible sun damage and pore size while you rest your head in the centre of the machine for 10 minutes. It then gives each category a percentage out of 100 compared to your peer group. While Iaced the test for pore size and elasticity, I got a shock when it came to sun damage. I'm in the bottom 1%. My skin is pale, freckly and prone to sunburn, so I've always been careful – it didn't make sense to me. Dr Williams reassured me it was accumulative since childhood and mostly reversible. She said my skin also isn't as dry as I believed and that by dousing it in heavy creams, I was, in fact, making it drier. Skin gets lazy when you're doing its job for it, plus layers of heavy products can trap dead skin and acne-causing bacteria.

My recommended routine is focused on repairing sun damage and boosting my skin's natural moisture levels. Dr Williams warned me that my face would feel drier at first as it adjusts to having to remember how to work all on its own. It involves using Avène's Extremely Gentle Cleanser Lotion, £10.50, in the morning, followed by a vitamin C serum and an SPF 50 gel for brightening and sun-protection. It's important to use a separate SPF, as well as that in any make-up, to protect against skin-damaging UV rays – even in winter. In the evening, I use SkinCeuticals' Rextexturing Activator serum, £85, and the skin-repairing La Roche Posay Redermic R Anti-Ageing Concentrate Intensive, £29.50, which I'm slowly building up to using three times a week. So far, my skin feels like it's adjusting to lighter creams day-by-day.

I'm not in three months the difference will be visible and I can't wait."



THE TIPS TO PASS ON

- ◆ Don't make your skin lazy. Avoid piling on heavy oils and moisturisers.
- ◆ A low SPF in your make-up isn't enough. Use a factor 50 underneath it.
- ◆ Sun damage can be reversed by building up your use of products containing vitamin A.

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