

Exactly How to Take Care of Your Skin in Your 20s, According to Top Derms



by ADRIANNA BARRIONUEVO



In your 20s, you're still quite young, but when it comes to skincare, it's the time to seriously nurture that complexion. The decade is time to rethink routine and give it a serious overhaul, but where do you even start?

There's the anti-aging stuff, which many experts say is important to start sooner than later. "Women should begin being proactive about anti-aging in their 20s. Research shows that as early as age 25 our skin's two

structural proteins—collagen (which keeps it firm, taut, and resilient) and elastin (which gives skin its flexibility, enabling it to stretch out and then snap back into place)—decrease,” says Dr. Dennis Gross, founder of 900 Fifth Dermatology in NYC.

If you’re unsure of first steps, don’t sweat it. We’ve got you covered and have gathered some of the best advice from the top dermatologists in the country. So whether you want to ensure wrinkle-free skin is in your future or you simply want to maintain its long-term health, implementing these tips into your skincare regimen now is crucial.

Read on to learn about the advice we got from the professionals about taking care of your skin in your 20s.

1. Don't skimp on exfoliation.



Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare Alpha Beta Peel Extra Strength Daily Peel (\$16)

“To continue daily collagen renewal, exfoliate daily. Products with salicylic, alpha, and/or beta hydroxy acids will help exfoliate dead skin cells and dirt off of the skin’s surface, as well as getting beneath the surface to unclog pores, prevent future breakouts, smooth texture, and boost cell renewal,” says Dr. Gross.



Dermalogica Daily Microfoliant (\$55)

2. Never underestimate the power of SPF.



Olay Regenerist Micro-Sculpting Cream with Sunscreen Broad Spectrum SPF 30 (\$21)

“UV rays are always around, even on a cloudy day, when you’re inside working near a window or even just driving your car,” says Dr. Elizabeth Hale, MD, clinical associate professor of dermatology at NYU Langone Medical Center. “In fact, UV rays can actually be reflected off of a variety of surfaces like concrete, sand, water, and snow. Reflected UV radiation is just as damaging as direct exposure,” she explains.

“Sun is the number one cause of external skin aging, and people should care about this level of sun exposure since it’s not always thought about on a daily basis. It’s essential to protect ourselves at all times because incidental sun exposure is always present, regardless of the season, and contributes to premature skin aging. This is why the key to any healthy skin regimen is using a daily SPF product year round.”



La Roche-Posay Anthelios 50 Mineral Ultra Light Sunscreen Fluid (\$34)

3. Your diet matters—so does exercise.



“Drink a lot of fresh water with a squeeze of lemon every day—try for two or three liters,” says Jeannette Graf, MD, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York and partner at OMNI Aesthetics MD. “Eat fresh greens and a lot of fiber; supplement with vitamin D3. Exercise regularly and live an alkaline lifestyle through diet for maximal health.”



Lululemon Loop It Up Mat Strap (\$18)

4. Cleansing and finding the right cleanser are critical.



Tata Harper Regenerating Cleanser (\$78)

Got the same skincare routine from college or high school? You may want to rethink your game plan because as you age, your skin has different needs. According to Dr. Gross, “Many people in their 20s continue to use the same harsh cleansers and drying astringents they relied on when they were oily and acne-prone teenagers. You may not see it, but at this phase in your skin’s life cycle, your oil glands are starting to shrink—making anti-acne and mattifying products that were once effective cause redness, flaking, and irritation.”

Dr. Rebecca Kazin, MD, of the Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery and the Johns Hopkins Department of Dermatology echoes this advice: “Even if you suffer from acne, skin shouldn’t be squeaky clean. Too much scrubbing only exacerbates the problem because it can cause irritation and lead to more breakouts.”



Eve Lom Cleanser (\$50)

5. Opt for oil-free products during the warmer months.



Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare Daily Essentials Hyaluronic Moisture Cushion (\$58)

We all know that plump, hydrated skin not only looks great but is also crucial for its health. “It is imperative that you incorporate a moisturizer with humectants to help the skin absorb and retain moisture,” says Dr. Gross. But before you grab a rich cream or foundation, remember that oil isn’t always your friend—instead look for hydrating ingredients that will mesh well with your skin.

“It is always good to look for hyaluronic acid as an active ingredient because it moisturizes via these humectants, which basically pull water vapor from the atmosphere and into the skin,” he says. “Hyaluronic acid is a naturally occurring ingredient found in the body that is completely compatible with the skin and doesn’t cause breakouts, which can still be a concern during this decade. It helps plump skin and reduces fine lines so you look instantly refreshed. Switch to an oil-free formula, especially in warmer temperatures.”



Bobbi Brown BB Cream SPF 35 (\$46)

6. Retinol is a key ingredient and multitasker.



Kate Somerville RetAsphere' Micro Peel Retinol Glycolic Treatment (\$90)

“Your skin starts to lose the ability to repair itself starting in your 20s, so it’s important to start early with an anti-aging regimen. The use of a conservative application of both retinol and glycolic combination will dramatically slow down the aging process while establishing a healthy routine,” says Dr. Craig Austin, who is a huge proponent of glycolic.

Not only is retinol a great anti-ager, but it also helps with keeping acne at bay, which makes the star ingredient a skincare favorite. “There is actually a lot of crossover between acne and anti-aging products. Retinoids cover both issues, and so do peels. Peels are great for people that find retin-A too irritating,” adds Dr. Kazin.



SkinCeuticals Retinol 1.0 (\$72)

7. Never sleep with your makeup on—seriously.



Burt's Bees Sensitive Facial Cleansing Towelettes With Cotton Extract (30 count) (\$6)

It's a no-brainer, but we're all guilty of sleeping in our makeup from time to time. Hey, it happens, but don't even think about making it a habit. "Doing so can block pores, leaving oil trapped inside," says Dr. Gross. "This leads to bacteria buildup and, yes, breakouts. It can also stretch out pores which no one wants. Try a cleanser that includes witch hazel extract, a natural toner with antioxidant and anti-irritant properties, or willow herb extract, which has natural antibacterial properties."



Dr. Dennis Gross All-In-One Cleanser With Toner (\$30)

8. Deal with your adult acne ASAP.



Acne happens well beyond high school, but it's important to treat it before it gets worse. "During this age, a few random breakouts can still emerge. Don't overdry your skin with the usual over-the-counter [treatments]. Consider getting a

prescription like Aczone 7.5%, which calms inflamed cysts of acne without drying the skin,” says Dr. Annie Chiu, MD, a board-certified cosmetic and general dermatologist.



Murad Acne Spot Treatment (\$18)

9. Kick start your anti-aging regimen.



Ole Henriksen Truth Serum Vitamin C Collagen Booster (\$48)

Everyone has a different philosophy when it comes to anti-aging. Starting out with at least one anti-aging product in your skincare routine could be a good way to ease into the process and also try out ingredients that work for you. “Start a product that contains vitamin C or other antioxidants. These products help prevent premature aging by preventing the oxidative damage that occurs with UV exposure and environmental pollution,” says Dr. Chiu.



Clinique Super Rescue Antioxidant Night Moisturizer (\$47)

10. Don't over do it.



Sunday Riley Blue Moon Tranquility Cleansing Balm (\$50)

Keeping prevention and skin's health as a priority is great, but it's also important to remember that doing too much can cause irritation and damage. Dr. Kazin has even noticed an influx in sensitive skin among patients in their 20s, due to skin overhauls that are too harsh. "I've noticed an increase in rosacea and acne in my early-20s patients. They are usually so focused on prevention that they tend to overcompensate and go overboard with certain products. Some are using products that are too harsh or irritating for their skin, like using a retinol that is too strong, or exfoliating too much," she says.

There's a method to changing up products if you're looking to solve any sensitivities. "If your skincare regimen isn't giving you results you want, simply change *one* product at a time," she explains. "Otherwise, you may have a reaction, and if you're using five new products at once, you'll have no idea what caused it. Use a new product for at least four weeks before adding another new one into your routine."



First Aid Beauty Ultra Repair Instant Oatmeal Mask (\$22)