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Skin Care Basics: How to Maintain Healthy and Glowing Skin for a Lifetime

The Importance of Caring For Your Skin

"The packaging is as important as the gift itself." This premise is something that most of the gift manufacturing companies follow very closely. The same holds good for you too. Your outer-self i.e. your skin is as important as your inner-self.

A lot of people do realize the importance of skin care. This is undoubtedly one reason why there are so many skin care products in the market and most of the skin care products seem to do pretty well. We generally tend to associate skin care to just good looks. However, there is more to it than just that. There are multiple benefits associated with a healthy and glowing skin.

First of all, it has a good effect on you yourself. It makes you feel fresh and energetic. You are able to do more work and are quicker with everything you do. More importantly, the freshness adds to your enjoyment and makes your day. So a healthy skin too plays its part in building confidence. Yes, you can take most of the credit for having achieved that (however, do leave a little to the skin care products).

Moreover, this flow of positive energy is experienced by people around you and you will observe that even they are friendlier with you. You get more respect from others. They are more responsive to your queries. They themselves experience the freshness that you are exuding. They love working with you and for you. Yes, that's how it works. Some people might even go ahead and ask you about the skin care products you use (you might or might not reveal those secret skin care products to them). Thus, a healthy skin can be instrumental in creating a pleasant and friendly environment around you.

On the other hand, carelessness or negligence on this front can make you look unattractive and dull. You will not only look dull but also feel dull. Your work efficiency is reduced. Even the people you meet might not be as friendly. In fact, it might lead to the aging process getting started much earlier.

Thus the importance of skin care cannot be ignored. However, good skin care is not that difficult at all. There are a lot of skin care products available and you can choose the ones that suit you the best. There are various ways in which skin care products are classified and having a basic knowledge of these classifications will help you understand them better and make a wiser selection.

- The first categorization is based on the **skin type** – so you have skin care products for oily skin, products for dry skin, products for sensitive skin etc.
- Another way is to categorize skin care products **based on their use** i.e. you have moisturisers, cleansers, skin care products for exfoliation, toners etc.

- Then you have skin care products for **treatment of various skin problems** i.e. skin care products for acne, skin care products for stretch marks, skin care products for anti-ageing etc.
- Another classification is **based on the ingredients** i.e. herbal skin care products, synthetic skin care products, cosmetic skin care products etc.

However, selecting the right products is not the only important component to good skin care. You also need to build a good skin care routine into your day to day life and make sure you stick to it.

'Personal Skin Care' Is a Routine

We all know the importance of 'personal skin care'. The opinion on how-to (for personal skin care) differs from person to person. Some people believe that going to beauty parlours every other day is personal skin care. Others believe that personal skin care is just a matter of applying some cream or lotion on your skin, every now and then. Then there are people who think that personal skin care is an event that happens once a month or once a year. Still others busy themselves with 'personal skin care' all the time. However, personal skin care is not that complicated and neither is it that expensive (considering how beneficial it is). Personal skin care is following a routine or a procedure for attending to the needs of your skin.

Even before you start with a routine, you need to determine your skin-type (oily, dry, sensitive, normal etc) and select the personal skin care products suitable for it (you might have to experiment with a few personal skin care products). Here is a routine that should work for most people with normal skin.

The first thing on personal skin care routine is 'Cleansing'. The three main ingredients of a cleanser are oil, water and surfactants (wetting agents). Oil and surfactants extract dirt and oil from your skin and water then flushes it out, thus making your skin clean. You might have to try a couple of cleansers before you find the one that suits you the best. However, you should always use soap-free cleansers. Also, you should use Luke warm water for cleansing (hot and cold water, both, cause damage to your skin). Take care that you don't over-cleanse your skin and end up damaging your skin in the process.

The second thing on the personal skin care routine is exfoliation. Skin follows a natural maintenance process wherein it removes the dead cells and replaces them with new skin cells. Exfoliation is just a way to facilitate the skin in this process. Dead skin cells are not capable of responding to personal skin care products but still consume these products, hence preventing them from reaching the new skin cells. Thus removing dead skin cells

is important in order to increase the effectiveness of all personal skin care products. Generally, exfoliation takes it place just after cleansing. As with any personal skin care procedure, it's important that you understand how much exfoliation you need. Exfoliate 4-5 times per week for oily/normal skin and 1-2 times per week for dry/sensitive skin. Exfoliate a couple of times more in hot and humid weather.

Next thing on personal skin care routine is moisturizers. This is one of the most important things in personal skin care. Even people with oily skin need moisturisers. Moisturisers not only seal the moisture in your skin cells, but also attract moisture (from air) whenever needed. Use of too much moisturiser can however clog skin pores and end up harming your skin. The amount of moisturiser needed by your skin will become apparent to you within one week of you using the moisturiser. Also, applying the moisturiser is best when your skin is still damp.

The last thing on personal skin care routine is sunscreen. A lot of moisturizers (day-time creams/moisturisers) come with UV protection – so you can get double benefits from them. Such moisturisers are recommended for all days (irrespective of whether it is sunny or cloudy).

Again, experiment with various personal skin care products and also with the amount you need to apply. What gives you best results is the best personal skin care recipe for you. However, if you have some kind of skin dilemma, it is best to consult your dermatologist before you actually start using any personal skin care products.

What is Natural Skin Care?

Put simply, 'natural skin care' is caring for your skin in a natural and chemical-free way. 'Natural skin care' advocates enabling the skin to take care of itself (without any assistance from synthetic materials/ chemicals). 'Natural skin care' is about inculcation of good habits in the way you lead your day to day life. A lot of natural skin care measures are actually the same as those for body care in general.

So let's see what these natural skin care measures are.

Well the first and the foremost natural skin care measure is – 'Drink a lot of water'. Around 8 glasses of water is a must everyday. Water helps in flushing out the toxins from the body, in a natural way. It helps in the overall upkeep of the body and promotes good health for all organs (not just skin).

General cleanliness is another inexpensive way of natural skin care. Daily shower, wearing clean clothes and sleeping on a clean mattress/pillow are all part of general cleanliness. After all, clean skin is the key to keeping the skin disorders at bay.

Regular exercise is the next thing on the cards. Exercise increases the flow of blood that helps in getting rid of body toxins and keeping you healthy. Exercise also helps in beating stress which is the worst enemy of good health.

Healthy food and eating habits are also recommended for natural skin care. Some type of food (e.g. oily food) is known to cause acne and should be avoided as much as possible. Your diet should be a healthy mix of various nutrient providing foods. Raw fruits and vegetables are known to provide freshness to your body and help in getting rid of body toxins.

A good sleep is also instrumental in maintaining good health and in beating stress. As a natural skin care measure, a good sleep delays slacking of skin.

Beating stress is another natural skin care therapy. Stress causes overall damage to body and health. Drinking a lot of water, getting a sound sleep and exercise has already been mentioned as stress busters. Indulging in a warm bubble bath, listening to music and playing your favourite sport are also good ways of beating stress. Yoga is yet another way of beating stress; it is fast gaining popularity amongst the masses.

Avoiding excessive exposure to sun (by wearing long sleeved clothes, hat and umbrella etc), is another natural skin care strategy. Sunscreen lotions are also recommended as necessary.

A lot of traditional and home made natural skin care products/ measures are also known to be very effective. Such measures are not only natural and easy-to-follow, but also relatively inexpensive.

Besides that, a lot of natural skin care products are available in the commercial market. These include things like lavender oil, aloe vera etc., which don't have any side effects.

Organic Skin Care

"If it can be done naturally, why go for artificial means" - this is the basic premise on which 'organic skin care' works. Organic skin care is the most natural way of 'skin care'. In fact, 'organic skin care' was probably the first one to be used by man when it first woke-up to the needs of his skin. 'Organic skin care' is not only friendlier to skin, but also inexpensive. If exercised in the right way, organic skin care can prevent the occurrence of a lot of skin disorders and can help keep your skin healthy and young-looking for a much longer time.

Organic fruits and vegetables are the most popular things on organic skin care routines e.g. cucumber is very common in organic skin care routines. Turmeric, apple, papaya, ginger are others that find a wide use in organic skin care routines. These organic materials have a very refreshing and vitalizing effect on your skin. Almost every skin

care book/guide has section on organic skin care (including the actions of various fruits and vegetables on skin). So choose the ones that are more suitable for your skin type and start experimenting with them until you finally select the ones that are most suitable for inclusion in your organic skin care routine. It's important that you use fresh organic fruits/vegetables. Don't try to utilise the rotten ones for your skin, their only place is the garbage bin.

Milk is known to possess good cleansing properties; in fact, the name of some skin care products contains the word 'milk' in them. A combination of milk with ground oatmeal acts as wonderful cleanser.

Ground oatmeal is especially good for oily skins and is a popular ingredient in organic skin care regimen. It is used in various combinations e.g. with egg, honey, milk and fruits, for preparation of organic facial packs.

Wheat germ is another ingredient in organic skin care procedures. It is rich in vitamin E and is known for its exfoliation as well as moisturising properties. Wheat germ, in various combinations with other organic materials, is used to prepare facial masks for normal and dry skin types. Wheat germ oil is another way in which wheat germ is used for organic skin care.

Yogurt and sour cream are other organic materials that are popular for their exfoliation and moisturising properties.

Use of organic honey is also popular in organic skin care procedures. It helps in retention of moisture and helps impart a glowing look to skin.

Rose water takes its place as a toner in organic skin care routines. Lavender water is popular too.

'Organic skin care' uses combinations of various organic materials that complement each other and enhance each other's effectiveness. Moreover, these combinations are also helpful in over-riding the harmful effects (if any) of various organic materials that form them.

Organic skin care is really an art that, once perfected, can give wonderful results in a very cost effective manner.

Herbal Skin Care

Skin care is not a topic of recent times; it has been in practice since ancient times, when herbal skin care was probably the only way to take care of skin. However, skin care has transformed in a big way. Herbal skin care routines have been replaced by synthetic/chemical-based skin care routines. The herbal skin care recipes that once used

to be common place are not so popular today (and even unknown to a large population).

This transformation from herbal skin care to synthetic, can probably be attributed to two things – our laziness (or just the fast pace of lives) and the commercialisation of skin care. Even herbal skin care products have been commercialised. These commercial herbal skin care products have to be mixed with preservatives in order to increase their shelf-life, hence making them less effective than the fresh ones made at home. However, it seems that things are changing fast and more people are now opting for natural and herbal skin care routines. But still, none want to make them at home and hence the commercial market of herbal skin care products is on the rise.

So what are these herbs or herbal skin care products?

Aloe vera, which is an extract from Aloe plant, is one of the best examples of herbal skin care product. Freshly extracted aloe vera is a natural hydrant that helps in soothing skin. It also helps in healing cuts and treating sun burns.

A number of herbs are known to possess cleansing properties. Dandelion, chamomile, lime flowers and rosemary herbs, are a few examples of such cleansers. Their herbal skin care properties get invoked when they are combined with other herbs like tea.

Antiseptics are another important part of Herbal skin care. Lavender, marigold, thyme and fennel are good examples of herbs that are known to possess antiseptic properties. Lavender water and rose water also form good toners.

Tea plays an important part in herbal skin care. Tea extracts are used for treatment of skin that has been damaged by UV radiation.

Oils prepared from herbal extracts present another means of herbal skin care. Tea tree oil, Lavender oil, borage oil and primrose oil are some popular oils used in herbal skin care. Some fruit oils (e.g. extracts from fruits like banana, apple and melon) find use in shower gels (as a hydrating mix)

Homeopathic treatments and aromatherapies also come under the umbrella of herbal skin care remedies.

Herbal skin care is good not only for the routine nourishing of skin but also for treatment of skin disorders like eczema and psoriasis. Most herbal skin care products don't have any side effects (the most important reason for preferring them over synthetic products) Moreover, herbal skin care products can be easily made at home, making them even more attractive. So, herbal skin care is the way to go.

However, this does not mean that you totally discard the synthetic products. Some people go to the extent of debating with their dermatologist, if he/she suggests a synthetic product. You should accept the fact that some skin disorders might need usage of clinically proven non-herbal skin care products.

Sensitive Skin Care

'Sensitive skin care' is governed by a few basic rules. However, even before we delve into the rules for sensitive skin care, it's important to understand what a sensitive skin is. Sensitive skin is one which is unable to tolerate any unfavourable conditions (environmental/other), and which easily gets irritated on contact with foreign materials (including skin care products). For this reason, some products are especially labelled as sensitive skin care products. The degree of sensitivity can however vary from person to person (and depending on that, the sensitive skin care procedures vary too).

Generally, all skin types respond negatively to detergents and other chemical based products. However, the damage starts generally beyond a defined threshold (or tolerance level). This tolerance level is very low for sensitive skin types, leading to skin getting damaged very easily and quickly. Sensitive skin care products either avoid the potential irritants or keep them at very low concentrations.

Here are a few tips for sensitive skin care:

- Use sensitive skin care products only (i.e. the products that are marked for sensitive skin care only). Also, check the instructions/ notes on the product to see if there are specific restrictions/warnings associated with the product).
- Even within the range of sensitive skin care products, choose the one that has minimum preservatives, colourings and other additives
- Do not use toners. Most of them are alcohol based and are not recommended for sensitive skin.
- Wear protective gloves when doing laundry or other chemical based cleaning. If you are allergic to rubber, you can wear cotton gloves below the rubber ones.
- Another important tip for 'sensitive skin care' is to avoid excessive exposure to sun. Apply sunscreen lotion before getting out in the sun.
- Avoiding exposure to dust and other pollutants is also important for sensitive skin care. So, cover yourself adequately before going out.
- Use hypoallergenic, noncomedogenic moisturizer as a sensitive skin care product (if there is none specifically labelled as a sensitive skin care product)
- Use soap-free and alcohol free cleansers. Cleanse your face whenever you return from spending time out doors.
- Do not scrub or exfoliate too hard. It can cause reddishness and even inflammation.
- Do not leave the makeup on for too long. Use hypoallergenic makeup- removers.

So, sensitive skin care is very different from the normal skin care. Sensitive skin care is more about being careful with your skin (both in terms of sensitive skin care products and protection against environments atrocities on skin).

Serious Skin Care

'Serious skin care' is about maintaining a healthy and glowing skin all through your life. As you grow older, your body's natural skin care mechanisms become weaker. So, 'serious skin care' is about responding to the changing needs of your skin. Thus, 'serious skin care' is about constantly evaluating, analysing and changing your skin care routines. Your skin care routine should change based on the environmental conditions, your age and changes in your skin type.

'Serious skin care' is also about awareness. With the technological advancements and research, more and more facts are being brought to light everyday. Also, the composition and nature of skin care products seems to be changing with time. So trying out the new products is also a part of serious skin care. However, 'serious skin care' advises using a new product over a small patch of skin (not facial skin) first, just to see how your skin reacts to it.

'Serious skin care' also means knowing how to use your skin care products. Good practices include things like applying the moisturizers while the skin is damp, using upward strokes for better penetration of skin care products, removing the make up before going to bed, cleansing before moisturising or applying make up, using the correct amount of skin care products, etc. Thus, increasing the effectiveness of your skin care products is another focus area of serious skin care.

Some precautions, like avoiding contact with detergents, are also part of serious skin care. 'Serious skin care' means being gentle with your skin. Things like over-exfoliation, use of low quality products, and application of strong-chemical based products, are all harmful to your skin. Some people have a wrong notion about serious skin care. For them serious skin care is - using large quantities of products as often as possible. However, this really isn't serious skin care (and that's why awareness is so important).

'Serious skin care' is also about visiting your dermatologist for treatment of skin disorders. Ignoring the skin disorders can be fatal for your skin and might lead to permanent damage. So, if the things don't improve with over the counter medication, you should immediately visit a dermatologist. Self-surgery e.g. squeezing of acne/pimples is a big no (it can lead to permanent damage of your skin).

So, seriously serious skin care is more about precautions and preventive measures (than treatment). Serious skin care is about being proactive as well as reactive. In fact, we can say that 'serious skin care' is about being proactive about the needs of your skin so that the need for being reactive is reduced to a minimum.

Skin Care Treatment for The Most Common Skin Conditions

Glowing and healthy skin is an asset. Skin is not all about beauty but also about health. So, skin care treatment should be treated with all seriousness. If you develop a skin related dilemma, you need an appropriate skin care treatment. Skin care treatment, for any skin disorder, starts with actions that are aimed at prevention of the disorder (what we can also call as proactive or preventive skin care treatment).

Building and following basic skin care procedures is what one could classify as preventive/proactive skin care treatment. Skin disorders can occur even if you have followed this preventive skin care treatment. Preventive skin care treatment just reduces the probability of occurrence. Let's check the skin care treatment for some of the common skin conditions.

Acne is one of the most common problems. Again, the first type of skin care treatment is to control acne and prevent it from getting worse. So avoid tight clothes; they are known to cause body acne by trapping sweat. Do not touch the blemishes over and over again (rather don't touch them at all), you might end up aggravating the condition. Also, do not try to scrub too hard or squeeze them. Use of mild cleansers is a recommended skin care treatment for acne. Obtain an over-the-counter skin care treatment for faster treatment of acne.

Skin care treatment of dry skin is generally easy. Moisturisers, applied in the right way and in the right quantity, are the best form of skin care treatment for dry skin. For best results, apply moisturiser while your skin is still damp. Also, do not apply too much or too little moisturiser. In exceptional cases, where you don't notice any improvements in 3-4 weeks, you might have to visit your dermatologist for skin care treatment of your dry skin.

Brown spots, which appear on sun-exposed areas of skin i.e. face and hands, are caused by over-exposure to UV radiations. As a skin care treatment for brown spots, use a sunscreen lotion which has a high SPF (sun protection factor), say 15. This should be used irrespective of weather – sunny/cloudy. Another form of skin care treatment is covering up the exposed areas with clothing (caps, full sleeved shirts/t-shirts, and umbrella).

Also, if the general skin care treatment or the over-the-counter medication is not working for you, you should immediately consult your dermatologist for professional skin care treatment. You should also inform the doctor about the skin care treatment that you have undertaken till that time. So take the details of the till-date skin care treatment (and products) along with you. Based on the skin condition and the details of your till-date skin care treatment, the dermatologist will prescribe a skin care treatment e.g. oral antibiotics, chemical peels, retinoid etc and you will be on your way to recovery.

Facial Skin Care

'Facial skin care' is more a matter of discipline than anything else. A facial skin care routine is what you need (and you need to follow the facial skin care routine with complete seriousness). So let's check what comprises an effective facial skin care routine. Well, very simply, a facial skin care routine can follow the following 4 steps:

- Cleansing
- Toning
- Exfoliating
- Moisturising

Cleansing is the first thing in facial skin care routine. Cleansing helps in removing dust, pollutants, grease and extra oil from your skin, thereby preventing damage to your skin. Just spot your face and neck with a good cleansing lotion or cream and gently massage it into your skin using upward strokes. Use a soft face tissue or cotton wool to wipe your face in a gentle patting fashion (do not rub). Cleansing should be done at least twice a day i.e. morning (as part of complete facial skin care routine) and evening (on a standalone basis). Water soluble cleansers are the best for inclusion in your facial skin care routine.

Toning is the next in a facial skin care routine. However, this is the optional part of the facial skin care routine. Mostly, proper cleansing can compensate for toning. Toning helps remove all traces of dirt, grease and excess cleanser. Instead of making it part of your daily facial skin care routine, you can use toning occasionally i.e. when you have been exposed to particularly harsh environment/pollution.

Exfoliation is again, kind of, optional step in everyday routine for facial skin care. However, exfoliation is necessary at least once a week (or twice, depending on the skin type and the environmental conditions). Exfoliation finds its place in facial skin care routine because of the natural tendency of skin to replenish the skin cells every 3 or 4 weeks. As a facial skin care technique, exfoliation helps in removing the dead skin cells that block the pores, thus assisting the skin in the natural process. However, excessive or harsh exfoliation can cause damage to your skin; so you need to balance it out.

The next thing in facial skin care is moisturising. In fact, moisturising is the most important part of facial skin care routine. Moisturisers prevent your skin from getting dry. Dry skin is really undesirable since it causes the upper layer skin to break, leading to dead skin cells. Again, use light upward strokes to make the moisturiser more effective. Moisturisers work the best when applied on warm and damp skin. So do not try to remove all the moisture in the previous steps of facial skin care routine.

Besides the normal facial skin care routine, you should also exercise the following for facial skin care:

- Use proper make-up remover instead of just washing it away

- Pay heed to your skin type and the environment, when choosing facial skin care products.
- Before you start using a new facial skin care product, test it by applying it on a short patch of skin e.g. ear lobes.
- Never rub your skin too hard.
- Use sunscreen lotions for protection against sun.

Choosing a Facial Skin Care Product

Talking about skin care, 'facial skin care' seems to top the chart. There are loads of facial skin care products available in the market. The most common facial skin care products are the ones that are used as part of daily routine. These include things like cleansers and moisturizers. Toners and exfoliation ones are well known too but not many people use them as such.

The general classification of facial skin care products is based on the following:

- Gender (so there are facial skin care products for men and there are facial skin care products for women)
- Skin type (facial skin products for oily skin, facial skin care products for dry skin, facial skin care products for normal skin and facial skin care products for sensitive skin)
- Age (facial skin care products for old and facial skin care products for young)
- Skin disorder (i.e. facial skin care products for treatment of various skin orders like eczema, acne etc)

So that is your starting point for choosing a facial skin care product that suits you. A good way to start is by determining your skin type first. Also note that the skin type changes with age, so the facial skin product that suits you today, might not suit you forever and hence you need to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of your facial skin care product.

The facial skin care products are available in various forms i.e. creams, lotions, gels, masks etc, and a lot of people try to pit one against the other in their discussion on which form is best. However, one can't really rate one form as better than another form. What suits you (and whatever you are comfortable with) is the best form of facial skin care product for you, really.

However, it's important to note that these products work differently for different people. So the best thing is to try the facial skin care product on a small patch of skin (e.g. ear lobes) before actually going ahead and using it.

Another important consideration is the state of your skin. If you are suffering from a skin disorder of any kind, it is best to seek the advice of a dermatologist before you actually make your selection and start using a facial skin care product.

Once you have selected the facial skin care product for yourself, you also need to ensure that you use the facial skin care product in the right way i.e. follow correct procedures for application, use the correct quantity and make the facial product a part of your skin care routine.

Which is the Best Skin Care Product?

There is really nothing like a best skin care product. There really can't be anything like 'The best skin care product', because skin care products work differently for different people (based on the skin type to some extent). A product that is the 'best skin care product' for one person might end up being the worst for another person. So, a more logical question to ask would be 'What is the best skin care product for my type of skin?'. However, this still is not completely logical.

We tend to segregate people into 4 groups based on their skin types – i.e. dry skin, oily skin, normal skin and sensitive skin. However, this classification is just too broad to be used definitively in determining the best skin care product. We can say 'best skin care product for a dry skin' or 'best skin care product for an oily skin' are better statements than just 'best skin care product'. But really, that is what it is – 'better'; still not best.

So, it really comes to rephrasing the question to – 'What is the best skin care product for me'. Yes, this is exactly the question that you should be asking, and unfortunately there is no easy answer for this. Arriving at the best skin care product for self will need some effort on your part.

First of all, you need to understand how the skin care products work. This is simple. You can consider all skin care products to be composed of 2 types of ingredients – Active and inactive. The active ingredients are the ones that actually work on your skin. The inactive ones just help in delivering these active ingredients to your skin. Both the ingredients need to work for your skin, in order for the product to be effective (and move on to become the best skin care product for you).

Besides the ingredients, the way you apply your skin care products is equally important. In fact, this is even more important. If you do not know how to apply skin care products, you might forever be hunting for the best skin care product for yourself, when that has already passed you. Moreover, it's also important to decide on the frequency of application (of the skin care product).

The environmental factors - temperature, humidity and pollution level, also affect the selection of best skin care product. Here are a few rules that you could use to ensure that your best skin care product is really the best for you:

- Cleanse your skin before applying that best skin care product.
- Use a makeup remover instead of plain water and remove your makeup before going to bed.
- The effectiveness of active ingredients is reduced when applied over another product e.g. over moisturiser. So apply that best skin care product first and then apply a bit of moisturizer if needed.
- Apply the products on moist and warm skin.
- You will have to experiment with a few products before you arrive at the one that is the best skin care product for you.
- Do not exfoliate too much or too hard.
- Vary your skin care routine as per the seasons (winter/summer etc), changes in environmental factors and changes in your skin type

Note that the best skin care product cannot be determined overnight. It's only through experiment (and awareness) that you can find the 'Best skin care product' for you.

The Facts about Oily Skin Care

To start the discussion on oily skin care, it's imperative to first understand the cause behind oily skin. Put simply, oily skin is a result of excessive production of sebum (an oily substance that is naturally produced by skin). As is known to everyone, excess of everything is bad; so excessive sebum is bad too. It leads to clogging of skin pores, resulting in accumulation of dead cells and hence formation of pimples/acne. Moreover, oily skin spoils your looks too. So, 'oily skin care' is as important as the 'skin care' for other types of skin.

The basic aim of 'oily skin care' is the removal of excessive sebum or oil from the skin. However, oily skin care procedures should not lead to complete removal of oil. 'Oily skin care' starts with the use of a cleanser. However, not all cleansers will work. You need a cleanser which contains salicylic acid i.e. a beta-hydroxy acid that retards the rate of sebum production. Cleansing should be done twice a day (and even more in hot and humid conditions).

Most of the oily skin care products are oil-free; however, it is always good to check the ingredients of the product, before you actually buy it. This is especially important if a product is marked as 'suitable for all skin types', instead of 'oily skin care product'. 'Oily skin care' is also dependent on the degree of oiliness, if you aren't too oily, so some of these 'suitable for all'- type of products might be work for you too. For extremely oily skin, only oily skin care products are suitable. Your oily skin care routine can include an

alcohol based toner (for an extremely oily skin). This can be the second step in your oily skin care routine i.e. just after cleansing. However, excessive toning can harm your skin.

The next step in your oily skin care routine can be a mild moisturizer. Again, the degree of oiliness of your skin will determine whether you need to include this in your oily skin care routine. If you do decide to include a moisturizer, be sure to use one that is oil-free, wax-free and lipid-free. You could also use a clay mask (say once a week) as an oily skin care measure.

As far as the oily skin care products go, you might need to try out a few before you arrive at the one that is really suitable for your skin.

In case these measures don't give you the desired result, consult a good dermatologist for advice. He could prescribe stronger oily skin care products like vitamin A creams, retinoids, sulphur creams etc , which can help counter the problems of oily skin.

The Recipe for Dry Skin Care

Dry skin cannot be ignored. Dry skin leads to cracking of the upper layer of skin and gives it a real bad appearance. The main causes of dry skin include: dry climate, hormonal changes, too much exfoliation and treatment of other skin disorders. Moreover, dryness could be the inherent nature of one's skin. Whatever be the cause, 'dry skin care' is very important (but not very difficult).

'Dry skin care' starts with moisturisers, the most effective remedy for dry skin. Generally moisturisers are classified under 2 categories based on the way they provide 'dry skin care'.

The first category includes moisturisers that provide 'dry skin care' just by preserving the moisture within the skin e.g. Vaseline. These moisturisers are relatively inexpensive and are readily available (even at grocery shops).

The second category includes moisturisers that work by drawing moisture from the environment and supplying it to the skin. This is a very effective way of 'dry skin care' in humid conditions. The moisturisers that provide 'dry skin care' in this way are also called humectants. For proper dry skin care, you must use a non-greasy type of moisturiser, as far as possible. Humectants fall in this category. The ingredients of humectants include propylene glycol, urea, glycerine, hyaluronic acid etc

'Dry skin care' is not about just using moisturisers but also using them properly. The best 'dry skin care procedure' is to cleanse the skin before the application of moisturiser. You can make your 'dry skin care' even more effective by applying the moisturiser while the skin is still damp (after cleansing). Also, make sure that you use soap-free products (especially on your face, neck and arms). Exfoliation does help in dry skin care, by

removing the dead skin cells. However, don't exfoliate too hard. Your dry skin care procedures/products should also take care of sun protection. Avoid too much and too direct exposure to sun (simply by using an umbrella/hat etc). Use a good sunscreen lotion before going out. A lot of moisturisers provide sun protection too, along with dry skin care.

You also have natural products for 'dry skin care' i.e. products that provide 'dry skin care' in a natural way (without the use of synthetic chemicals). These dry skin care products supply lipid enhancements to the skin, hence enabling moisture retention within the skin. Another, important thing for 'dry skin care' is the temperature of water you use for shower or for washing your face – Use warm water; too hot or too cold water can cause dryness too.

'Dry skin care' is also about being gentle with your skin. You should avoid harsh detergents and alcohol based cleansers. Also, after a face wash, do not rub your towel on your face, just pat gently to soak the water off.

On the whole, dry skin care is really simple for anyone who takes beauty seriously.

I Didn't Order that Combo! Combating Combination Skin

If there are parts of your face that are oily, while other parts are dry, then you have what is called combination skin. As a general rule, your skin will likely feel fairly normal to you on most of your face. The oily part will be mostly in the T-zone area. The T-zone area is the part of your face across your forehead and down your nose and chin, forming a "T" on your face. There are certain other signs to look for so that you will know if you have combination skin and will know how to treat it.

For one thing, some areas of your face may feel tight after you wash. This will typically be on the parts of your face not included in the T-zone area. These areas will likely also look flaky and dull and may feel rough. A second sign would be that parts of your skin will look shiny, feel greasy, or be prone to pimples and blackheads. This will typically happen in the T-zone area.

Perhaps the biggest frustration for those with combination skin is caring for it properly. Having both dry and oily skin areas on your face can make skin care seem almost impossible. There are, however, things that you can do to care for and keep your combination skin healthy and feeling good.

First of all, make sure you are cleansing every day. Use a mild cleanser on your entire face. Use the cleanser twice a day, preferably before bed at night and after get up in the morning. These are the times your face most needs to be cleansed anyway, but if you have combination skin it is imperative.

Get a good moisturizer. Once you have identified which parts of your face are the dry parts, most likely these areas are not in the T-zone and this is the area you will treat. Use the moisturizer on those dry areas only. Using it in your oily T-zone will only make that area worse.

The goal when you have combination skin is to normalize it. Normalizing is trying to gain a balance between the oily and dry areas so that all your skin looks and feels the same. In order to accomplish this feat, you want to look for products that are made for such normalization. For instance, ones that contain alpha hydroxyl acids (fruit acids or AHA's) or retinols will work best. Retinols are a vitamin A derivative. Such products should help you to gain more normal and even looking skin.

The reason AHA creams are so beneficial to your skin is that they are catalyst for skin cell regeneration. By burning off or removing the top layer of skin cells (or the too oily and too dry ones) they expose the healthier skin cells beneath them. These cells are more likely to absorb moisturizers. They also help improve skin elasticity through their water-binding properties. This can help with that "tight" feeling you may get in the dry areas with your combination skin. The only thing about which you need to be aware is that once you are using AHA's, you need to continue using them. Once you stop, your cells will not regenerate at the rate they were with the AHA and will return to their original state very soon.

The next important move is to try to control the shine. The oily areas of your face will tend to shine as oils collect in the pores. When you buy makeup, look for something that is labeled as "oil-absorbing." Such makeup is made to soak up oils from your face and prevent shine. Again, this will likely be more of a problem in your T-zone area than anywhere else.

Combination skin can be uncomfortable, frustrating, and on certain days embarrassing. However, it is not an impossible or untreatable problem. By recognizing that you have combination skin, taking the time to identify your areas, and learning treatments you can still have beautiful skin. Be sure to read your makeup labels and skin care product ingredients to keep you looking even, natural, and beautiful. Make sure you understand what each product you put on your face does so that you will know when and where to put your products on your face. By learning not to additionally dry the dry areas or moisturize the oily areas, you can achieve balance and a natural glow.

Are Natural Skin Care Products the Answer to All Problems?

When it comes to skin care products, you will find that a lot of people are very particular about using only natural skin care products. They treat all the synthetic products as harmful to the skin.

So, are natural skin care products the answer to all of our problems? What if a natural skin care product is not available for the treatment of a particular skin disorder? Are the synthetic skin care products so harmful that they should be banned?

Different people have different answers to these questions. However, the reality is that due to presence of synthetic preservatives, it's really tough to find a natural skin care product that is 100% natural. There are natural skin care products that have natural preservatives, but their cost might be detrimental. Moreover, such natural skin products have a shorter shelf life and hence are not preferred by the manufacturers of natural skin care products.

Some people carry a wrong notion that since natural skin care products are natural, they cannot cause any harm to the skin. The suitability of a skin care product is not based on whether it is synthetic or natural. An unsuitable natural skin care product can harm you in almost the same way as a synthetic one. So, use natural skin care products, but be open to synthetic ones too (you might need them when a natural solution is not available)

Your selection of a natural skin care product should be based on 3 factors:

- The skin type (dry, oily, normal, sensitive) of the person who will use that natural skin care product
- The climatic conditions in which it will be used e.g. hot and humid condition would warrant the use of oil-free natural skin care products.
- The process for application/use of the natural skin care product. A good natural skin care product (in fact any product) can seem useless if not used in the proper way.

You can also make natural skin care products by yourself, by using the recipes that are readily available on the internet and in the books at book stores.

Use of organic fruits and vegetables is also popular as a natural skin care procedure. Some essential oils, herbal oils, are useful too and are known for their moisturising and antiseptic properties

However, using a natural skin care product does not mean that you can exercise carelessness with other aspects of skin care. Natural skin care products should be used like supplements to the following 'essential' recommendations: healthy eating habits (avoiding oily food), regular exercise, drinking a lot of water (8 glasses everyday), and cleanliness. This will then form a perfect and completely natural skin care routine that will help maintain a healthy beautiful skin for longer time.

Lotions, Ointments and Masks – Oh My! The Basics of Skin Care

When our grandmothers were young skin care seemed so easy. Today however, with thousands of skin products on the market, the basics of skin care can seem overwhelming. Cosmetic salespeople throwing lotions, ointment, and masks at every woman in sight does not make the matter any better. The truth is that if you want great skin, you do need to gather information on at least a few products in order to help you with your task.

Women today are plagued with sun damage, stress, poor diets, and air pollution, and their skin shows it. With so many skin damaging components in our everyday lives, there is a great need for counteraction. You can counteract these damaging components with great skin products. One of the basics of skin care is lotion. Lotion is extremely important because it helps the skin maintain its moisture. Hydration is a key to having great skin. Skin that is not properly hydrated will become dry, dull, and irritated. Even oily skin that is not hydrated will become troublesome. Therefore, it is important to use lotion at least twice a day on your skin.

There are different types of lotion for different areas of skin however. You should always use a lotion that is hypoallergenic as well as one that will not clog your pores. Facial lotions tend to be referred to as moisturizers most often. Lotions for other areas of your body are usually called body lotions. Make sure you are using the proper type of lotion on each area of your body. Body lotions are often too harsh for your face, so beware. Lotions are also broken up into moisturizing intensities. If you have dry skin, you will need more moisture. If you have oily skin, do not make the mistake of thinking you don't need lotion. Your skin is producing oil because your hydration levels are off. Use a light moisturizer for oily skin.

Ointments are most often used for skin problems. You will often see ointments being used for eczema, rashes, or hives. Sometimes however, you may find that some women call specialty creams ointments. These creams are most often used for eye areas. If you hear someone talking about eye ointment, it is probable they are referring to specialty eye creams. These creams are great for hydrating the eye area and treating and preventing wrinkles in the area.

If you are looking for a once or twice a week pick-me-up for your skin, a mask is the way to go. Masks can be found for any skin type. They also come in many varieties containing many different ingredients. You can find masks with mud components to soothe and smooth your skin. You can also find masks that will help with acne. All masks work to help tighten your facial pores and smooth your skin's appearance.

Masks should be used once or twice a week. Most masks are made so that you just apply them to your skin and wait. While you wait the mask will begin to dry and you may feel your face tightening. This is normal and indicates the mask is doing its job. After waiting for 10 to 15 minutes, you will need to rinse the mask off of your face. You can do this with a wash cloth, or you can use water alone. After using your mask, dry your face completely and apply a moisturizer. Since masks take a little hydration from your face, you must replenish it.

In addition to face masks, you can also get full body masks. These masks work the

same way as a facial mask and will rejuvenate your entire body. Many salons are now offering body masks. They can help tighten and smooth the skin on your entire body. Be sure to drink plenty of water after you get a full body mask however. Body masks draw toxins from your body and may leave you a little dehydrated, so drinking water is essential.

Knowing about lotions, ointments, and masks will help you get the skin you desire. The most important thing to remember is proper hydration. Be sure your skin is always hydrated with lotions. You can also drink water to help your skin hydrate from the inside. If you take care of your skin, you will notice that your skin will always look radiant and fresh which is what all women dream of.

Lotions vs. Skin Care Creams

There is no dearth of skin care creams and lotions in the market. Name an ailment, and you will find hundreds of skin care creams, lotions and other products for it. As a result of ongoing research and due to ever increasing demand, the number of skin care products seems to be on the increase. Skin care lotions and skin care creams are the most popular forms in which these products are available, and there always seems to be a debate on which form is better?

Well, there is no definitive answer to this. It seems more like a matter of personal choice. However, greasy creams are surely less popular as compared to the non-greasy (or less greasy) ones. Since the application of skin care creams is easier, they seem to be preferred (over lotions) in cases where the skin care product is not to be removed immediately after application. So, skin care creams seem more popular as moisturisers than as cleansers or toners. For toners, lotions seem to be preferred over skin care creams. There are some skin care creams that acts as toners too, but generally the toners are available in liquid form only. For cleansing, lotions and skin care creams are equally popular; however, the tilt seems more towards lotions.

Creams are known to be most effective in keeping skin moist; hence, the most popular form of skin care creams is moisturisers. Due to the same reason, a lot of people tend to associate skin care creams with dry and sensitive skin. Though it is true to a certain extent, skin care creams are not used only for dry skin, they are also used for making products for oily skin e.g. vitamin A creams and sulphur creams that help reduce the rate of sebum production.

Skin care creams are also used for products that cater to skin disorders especially for disorders that require the application of product over a small localised area. This is again due to the fact that skin care creams are easier to apply (without wastage) on the affected area. However, in cases where skin needs to be washed using a medicine/product, lotion is a better choice. Mostly, the manufacturers too realize this fact, making it easier for you to choose between a lotion and a skin care cream

Eye-creams and anti-ageing creams are other examples where skin care cream is preferred over its lotion counterpart.

Whatever your choice be (cream or lotion), knowing how to use it effectively, is more important than anything else.

Acne Skin Care

Acne is defined as a diseased condition of the skin that involves the hair and oil glands. It is characterised by pimples, black/white heads, reddishness and cysts. Face acne can spoil your appearance to a great extent and body acne can really ruin your day by making you very uncomfortable. Considering acne as a minor problem, some people tend to totally discard the topic of 'Acne skin care'. However, the importance of 'Acne skin care' cannot be undermined in any way.

Acne skin care should really start much before the acne actually appears. 'Acne skin care' is more about being proactive than reactive. Acne skin care is about being aware of preventive measures. Acne skin care is - following daily skin care routines with complete discipline. So let's have a look at how 'acne skin care' can be applied to our daily routine.

'Acne skin care' starts with the most basic thing - cleanliness. So morning showers are the most basic way of keeping the skin clean. In fact, a lot of people take night showers too (that not only helps in keeping your skin clean but also provides relaxation to your body and enables a good sleep). If you are living in a hot and/or humid place, a night shower becomes a must. In fact, a shower is recommended after any activity that causes high levels of sweat to develop. It's a very effective 'acne skin care' technique.

However, acne skin care is not about just showers. Acne skin care is also about wearing clean clothes and sleeping on clean pillows. Moreover, too tight clothes can cause sweat to accumulate quickly; so soft and comfortable cotton clothes are recommended, especially if you already have acne. In the same sense, 'acne skin care' also advocates regular cleaning of your make-up brush and any equipment that you use on your body.

Besides that, you should also use a mild, water-soluble, oil-free and soap-free cleanser for keeping your face, neck and arms clean. Cleansing is the most important part of any acne skin care routine. Cleaners are the easiest and the most effective way of removing dirt, grease, pollutants and excess oil from your skin; thus reducing the probability of acne occurrence. Acne skin care also recommends removing your make up using a make up remover, and this should happen before you go to bed (not in the morning).

If you already have acne, do not try to touch them or squeeze them; it can lead to permanent scars. 'Acne skin care' advocates gentle cleansing and cleaning of the affected area using an over-the-counter medication and a clean/soft cotton pad. There are various acne skin care creams and lotions available over-the-counter (a lot of these acne skin care products are actually cleansers). However, if these 'acne skin care'

measures don't give you the desired results, contact a dermatologist for 'acne skin care' advice and treatment.

Top 10 Skin Care Tips

Healthy skin is really one of the most important ingredients for beauty-enhancement. This list of skin care tips has been restricted to 10 because anything more than that would not only be difficult to remember, but also shadow the more important tips. So let's see what this top 10 list consists of:

- **Knowing your skin type** is one of the most important skin care tip. This is important because not every skin care product suits everyone. In fact, all the skin care products specify the type of skin they cater to.
- **'Drink a lot of water'**. This will not keep your skin moist but will help in overall upkeep of your health (and in turn your skin). It might seem a bit awkward to some, however, this is an important skin care tip.
- **Cleanse your skin regularly** (1-2 times everyday). A very effective skin care tip that helps in getting rid of the dirt and other harsh elements from your skin. Cleansing is especially important when you have been out of your house (and hence exposed to pollutants, dust etc). This skin care tip also advocates the use of Luke warm water for cleansing (hot and cold water, both, cause damage to your skin)
- **Be gentle**, after all it's your skin. Don't scrub/exfoliate too hard or too often. Similarly, don't apply too much or too many skin care products. A must-to-follow skin care tip.
- **Keep your skin moist at all times**. This is one of the most important skin care tip. Don't let your skin get dry. Dryness causes the outer layer of your skin to break, leading to a rough and unattractive appearance. Use moisturisers/emollients. Moisturisers work best when applied while the skin is still damp.
- **Avoid the use of soap on your face**. Soap should only be used from below the neck. A small but important skin care tip.
- **Use sunscreen** to protect yourself from sun's harmful UV radiations. You can use day-time moisturisers that have sunscreen built into them. Use them even when it's cloudy. UV radiations are known to cause skin cancer, so follow this skin care tip without fail.
- **A bit of exercise and good sleep** are essential too, not just for skin care but for your health as a whole. Lack of sleep can lead to formation of wrinkles below your eyes and lack of exercise can cause your skin to slack. Moreover, exercise and sleep also help in beating stress. So besides being a skin care tip, this is also a health care tip.
- **Treat skin dilemmas with care**. This skin care tip is about not ignoring any skin dilemmas. Consult your dermatologist before you go on to use a skin care product (lest you do end up harming your skin even more).

- **Beat the stress.** The harmful effects of stress are known to everyone, however, sometimes stating the obvious is essential too (and hence this skin care tip found its place here). Yes, stress harms skin too. So, take a break or indulge in a warm bubble bath or just get a good night's sleep.

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