

A bright refreshed look for the New Year: Repairing and Pampering your skin

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Resolving to take better care of your self in the New Year? Don't forget your skin! Skin care is a multi-billion dollar industry and sorting out the best treatments can be overwhelming but there are certain basic principles to remember.

Be cautious of claims of dramatic results and realize that caring for your skin, just like caring for your general health is an ongoing process that requires maintenance for optimal results. The expression "you are what you eat" has implications for our skin (our largest organ) as for other organ health. With the growing trend toward wellness and prevention, there is an evolving emphasis on "nutraceuticals", products taken orally with purported general health benefits such as vitamins. This concept is nothing new, dating back to the ancient Egyptians, and while supplements such as vitamins A, C and coenzyme Q10 are suggested to be generally beneficial, scientific evidence is lacking for specific skin effects. More directly, "cosmeceuticals" are products applied topically with purported skin health benefits, such as vitamins and botanicals. While cosmeceuticals are non-prescription, they may contain derivatives of vitamin A (retinoids). Whereas there is scientific proof of the efficacy of topical prescription strength vitamin A (retin A) to improve the skin, the milder over-the-counter derivatives as in cosmeceuticals may not have the same efficacy.

Skin aging is influenced externally by environmental exposures, primarily the sun (ultraviolet UV radiation) and internally by the skin's normal protective responses to such exposures such as with naturally occurring antioxidants (vitamins A and C). These substances help to protect the skin by assisting in cellular repair mechanisms. Hereditary factors of course play a large role as with differing skin types, susceptibility to sun damage and the body's ability to repair the damage.

So, what to do:

- limit sun exposure and use a broad-spectrum (UVA and UVB) sun block with an SPF of at least 30
- limit other environmental exposures such as smoking
- drink plenty of water and maintain as healthy a diet as possible, consider dietary supplements
- gently exfoliate periodically to remove the most superficial skin cells ready to slough off

- moisturize and apply appropriate topical products as recommended by a skin care professional after analyzing your skin

A skin care professional or aesthetician, can help sort out all the options and recommend a personalized treatment regimen. This will typically involve both aesthetician treatments such as microdermabrasion, facials and peels as well as a home care program. Although true beauty is more than skin deep, you can still resolve to put your “best” face forward for the New Year!

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