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HEALTHLINE

Paramount's Monthly Magazine

Skin Health
Tips to reduce acne
...and more!
What's important?
Know your skin!

"Do not wait; the time will never be 'just right.' Start where you stand, and work with whatever tools you may have at your command, and better tools will be found as you go along."

- George Herbert

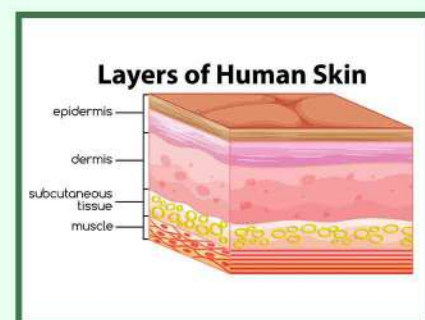
Is skin your most important organ?

Did you know that skin is the largest organ in the body? Yes! Seems like such an obvious thing right? But how often do we really think of skin from a health perspective? It is in fact one of the first barriers against disease and infection and protects the internal organs from any injuries or mishap.

The structure of the skin

(Courtesy: MD Skin Lab)

As you can see, there are four layers to the skin and each layer provides its own function to keep our skin looking healthy and fight off infections.



Here's what you need to know

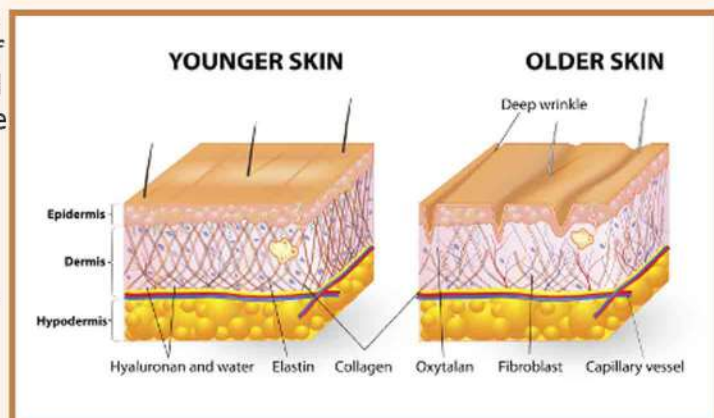
Epidermis: This layer generates new cells and provides protection. It is also responsible for making melanin. Epidermis acts as a physical shield between the body and the environment, however, it also contains Langerhans cells which have the immune functions to protect the body as a whole.

Dermis: Just as important as epidermis, but has slightly different functions. It is responsible for generating sweat and sensation through nerve endings which also enable protection. Dermis is also the layer where hair roots are found and it is also responsible for producing and conveying sebum, which is your skin's oil.

Hypodermis: This acts as a connecting tissue between the dermis and the muscle layer and is also made up of fat. Not just that, it also supports the blood vessels and nerve cells reaching the dermis layer and helps with the transmission of blood and sensation to the rest of the body.

The skin is also responsible for acting as a reservoir of vitamins and minerals. Yes, that's right. It supports the synthesis of vitamin D through calcium and phosphate that keeps our muscles, bones and teeth healthy.

(Courtesy: sarahchapman.com)



What does aging skin mean?

Epidermis thins

Number of pigment containing cells decrease

Looks thinner, paler, clear or translucent

Pigmented spots may appear on the sun-exposed parts

Reduced strength and elasticity

Blood vessels in dermis become more fragile

Easily prone to bruising or bleeding

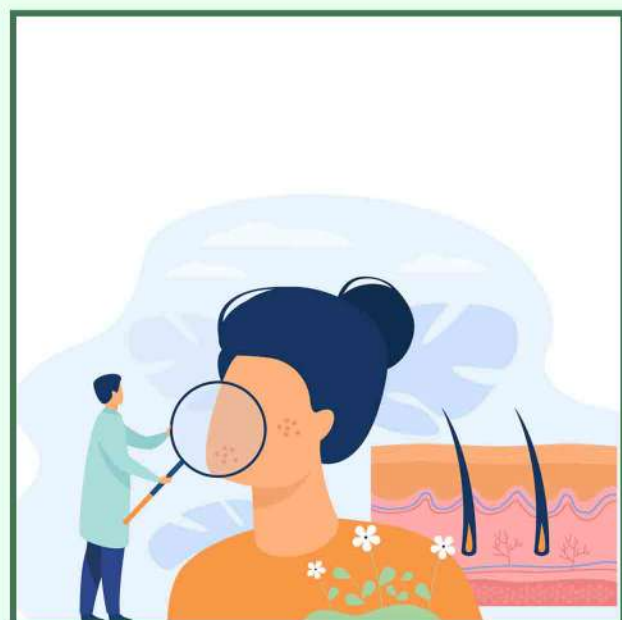
Sweat glands produce less sweat

Less insulation and padding as the fat layer thins

Inability to maintain proper body temperature

Less oil production

Prone to more skin problems



The right skin cream can keep your skin looking young.

Best way to keep wrinkles away from skin to look young is to use sunscreen and stay away from smoking. There is no sure shot way to slow the aging process and while all the companies market anti-aging, anti-wrinkle products, they may not work for most. Retinoic acid is the main ingredient that has anti-aging properties, however, it is difficult to say how well it works in these products that are marketed.

Antibacterial soap is best for keeping your skin clean.

Regular soap is just fine! You do not need an antibacterial soap unless otherwise prescribed by a doctor for a particular skin condition. We have both good and bad bacteria and it is impossible to remove all of bacteria with simply a soap. Using such soaps in fact could lead to other skin issues as you may be removing the good bacteria that keeps your skin healthy. Talk to your dermatologist if you need any specific soap for your skin condition.

Tanning is bad for you.

Developing a gradual or light tan through careful sun exposure is not bad for you. This does not mean skipping the sunscreen. It is vital that you are using a sunscreen with SPF 30 at least and being careful to not expose yourself during peak hours of the sunlight. Make sure there is no sunburn.

Tanning is good for you.

Exposure to adequate amount of sunlight is good for you. However, people associating dark tan to good health is not true as there is no evidence to prove the same. Getting vitamin D from sun exposure is important as it helps in several functions of the body like keeping your bones and muscles healthy, as well as helping in reducing the stress hormones.

The higher the SPF of your sunscreen, the better.

Experts usually recommend SPF 30 at least for anyone who spends some time in the sun. However, after a certain point the SPF value does not matter if the exposure to sun is well within limit. If you are planning to spend peak hours under the sun, then a higher SPF might be helpful. SPF 30 blocks out 97% of UVB rays.

Vitamin E will make scars fade.

Very little evidence to support this claim. There are several ways to make scars fade, including some laser treatment, so it's best to speak to your dermatologist to know all the options before relentlessly buying vitamin E and applying on the affected area.

Crossing your legs causes varicose veins.

No, there is no evidence to show that crossing your legs causes varicose veins. In fact, according to studies almost 80% of people get varicose veins from a parent who has the same condition. There are other things too that could make one prone to this condition like - smoking, inactivity, high blood pressure, pregnancy, obesity, prolonged standing and such.

How to maintain skin health?

Sunscreen

The UVB rays from the sun are responsible for many skin diseases, including cancer. A sunscreen acts as a physical (sometimes even chemical) shield between your skin and the rays and blocks out about 97% of the harmful UVB rays. It may seem like an easy thing to miss if you spend most of your time indoors or in a wintery place, however, it still remains important to use this for maintaining good skin health.

Moisturise

Some people may think having naturally oily skin means not moisturising and here's where they are wrong. While skin naturally produces sebum, it is important to do a cleanse and moisturise externally as well. It is advised that one should moisturise right after a bath to lock in the hydration. A hydrated skin looks healthy and wrinkle-free. If you have oily skin, you can possibly speak to a dermatologist to get creams that are lighter than others.



Sleeping

Over the years, humans have gone through several stages of evolution but one thing has remained the same - their need to catch a good night's sleep. With our busy schedules, our sleeping pattern has been highly affected and that's where the problem lies. Sleep acts as a natural recovery period for your body, including your skin to repair any damage. Normal signs of sleep deprivation that you should know: wrinkles, puffiness and dark circles.



Diet, nutrition, water

Food is essential to keep our bodies up and running while fighting off any illnesses! Just as we recognise food groups that help keep up our immunity, we should also be aware of foods that make our skin go "aaaaargh". Avoiding oily and sweet food should be on top of the NO list when it comes to skincare. If you aren't already aware, you should know that studies also point out a correlation between gut health and skin. The good microbes in your stomach are responsible for good gut and skin health! Keep those probiotics coming in.

Hydration is another important element that is not to be missed out. It helps in maintaining the elasticity of the skin making it look younger and wrinkle-free.



Exercising

According to research physical activity is an important element in keeping skin looking healthy and young. As noted before, the dermis carries the blood vessels, and the blood carries oxygen and nutrients to working cells throughout the body which also includes the skin. So, with exercise, there is additional flow of blood, providing sufficient amount of oxygen.



Being physically active is anyway a good sign of keeping healthy.

Apple Cider Vinegar remedy

- Mix 1 part apple cider vinegar and 3 parts water (use more water for sensitive skin).
- After cleansing, gently apply the mixture to the skin using a cotton ball.
- Let it sit for 5–20 seconds, rinse with water and pat dry.
- Repeat this process 1–2 times per day, as needed.



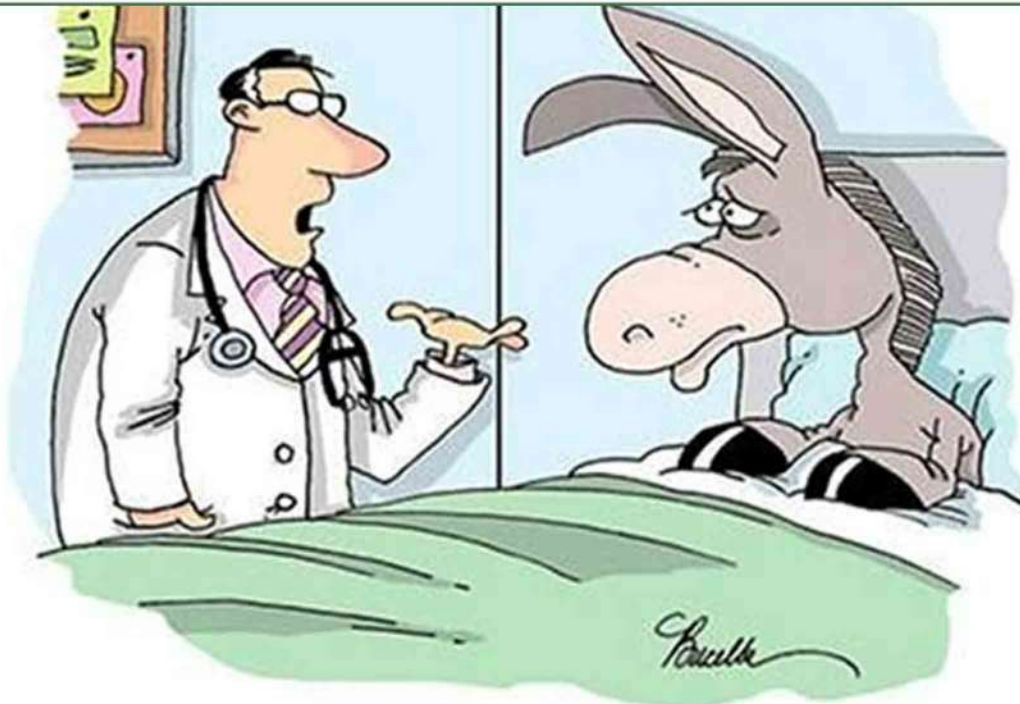
Honey and cinnamon mask

- Mix 2 tablespoons of honey and 1 teaspoon of cinnamon to form a paste.
- After cleansing, apply the mask to your face and leave it on for 10–15 minutes.
- Rinse the mask off completely and pat your face dry.



Aloe vera gel

- Scrape the gel from the aloe plant out with a spoon.
- Apply the gel directly to clean skin as a moisturizer.
- Repeat 1–2 times per day, or as desired.



"It's simple. My nurse blindfolds me, I spin around a few times, and then I try to reattach your tail."


Dr Comics, M.D.

Courtesy: Reader's Digest

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