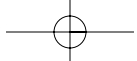




How YOUR **SKIN**
PROTECTS YOU

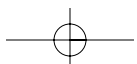
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Beauty Tip from
Susan L. Taylor

*B*ecause of my lifestyle, I do wear makeup on a daily basis. I keep it very understated, however, unless the occasion (award presentations, television programs, special appearances) calls for special emphasis. Before I apply any makeup, however, I always start with a three-part skin-care regimen—cleanser, toner, and moisturizer.

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Your skin can be your best friend. It is your confidante. It is your protector. It takes all types of abuse, and yet it is quickly ready to forgive.

Your skin is a multifaceted creation that can't be duplicated by human beings. It keeps out the harsh external environment—that is, germs and bacteria—while it protects your vital organs. It helps maintain your body temperature by preventing heat from escaping too rapidly, which would be harmful or even fatal. Your skin stores nutrients for future protection.

Your skin is versatile and sensitive. It reacts to stress, pain, illness, pleasure, and happiness as well as to light and dark, hot and cold. It stretches and shrinks, wrinkles and unwrinkles. It needs minimal but regular, consistent, and thorough attention if you want it to show you at your very best. But for all your skin's strength and versatility, today it is under siege. It was not constructed to withstand being bombarded by today's natural and unnatural stresses.

GEOGRAPHY AND THE SEASONS

Where you live has a direct effect on your skin, particularly on your face, which is almost always exposed to the elements. Your face has an upper, or outer, layer of skin called the epidermis. This layer is what you touch and see when you look in the mirror. Another name for this layer, owing to the shape of the cells making up the layers, is the “horny” layer (stratum corneum).

Although everyone has this outer skin layer, the thickness of the covering differs from person to person. African Americans have more layers to their epidermis than do whites. But even among blacks, the number of layers varies. Now you can understand why your face, to some degree, reacts differently to the forces assaulting it than do the faces of other women you know. The outermost portion of the epidermis consists of dead cells. That is why sometimes, after washing your face and drying it with a face towel, you may notice flaking skin on your forehead. Your face casts off this



The upper layer of epithelial tissue, the under layer of germinating tissue, and the dermis, with regular blood cells.

outermost layer of skin in pieces. As the outer layer is dispelled, an underlayer takes its place. This process constantly renews your skin. Each outermost layer falls away when it has absorbed all the stress it can manage, and then the underlayer takes its place.

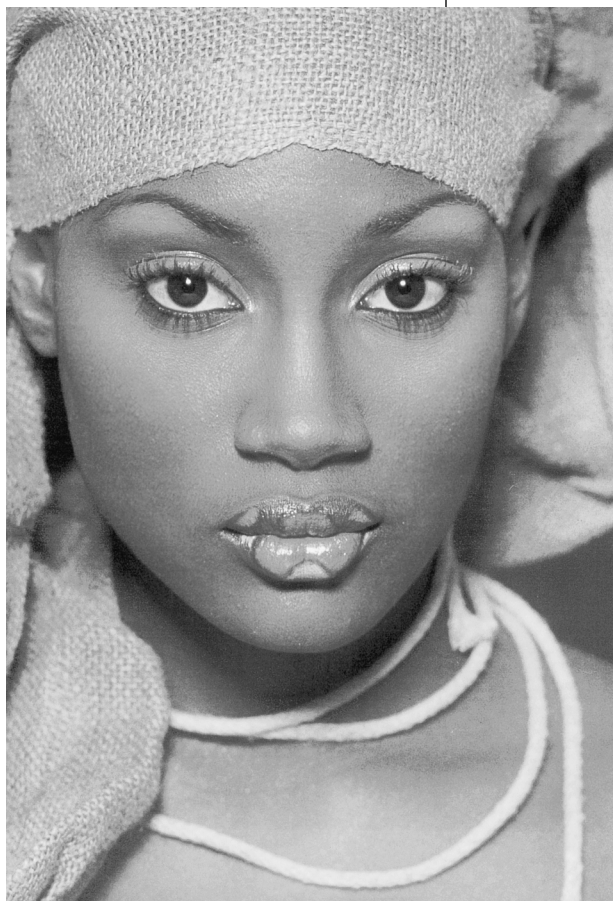
When this surface action is taking place, the underlayer is protected, waiting to supply your face with a new fighting army of cells. Beneath the epidermis is the germinating layer, but before discussing this lower layer, let's see what geography and climate can do to the outer layer of your skin.

If you live in a region that is warm year-round, like California, then your skin will be affected differently than if you live on the East Coast, in a climate that has four varying seasons. Obviously, where your home is determines the amount of the sun and its damaging ultraviolet rays that you will be exposed to. But this is only the beginning.

Office buildings are air-conditioned year-round. When you fly, you are in a pressurized aircraft. The same air is continuously recirculated, sometimes for several hours. Moisture in the air gets lost. The drier air can lead to drier skin. Whether you're in the sky or on the ground, air-conditioning draws humidity from the air and moisture from the skin. Central heating also dries out the skin. These modern conveniences are stressful to your face and trigger the aging process prematurely. If you go from your climate-controlled home or office into a sun-drenched day, you bombard your skin with ultraviolet rays and further draw off moisture. Whenever that happens, your skin really takes a beating. The skin is left dry, peeling, and if the exposure was too intense, with its underlayers damaged.

This is the damage that sunburns do: you peel or you're left with leathery-looking skin. Worse, this constant negative stress breaks down the face's connective tissue, resulting in wrinkles and "premature aging." With steady damage, those wrinkles and lines around the eyes and mouth get deeper and become more prominent.

If you live in a seasonally cool or temperate climate, you might feel safer. But wherever you live or work, your skin is often exposed to automobile emissions, major industrial pollutants, and wind. Wind alone can strike at your skin and cause damage, but when that wind carries pollutants, the problem is intensified. The pollutants that cause acid rain



destroy forests and crops, so you can imagine the struggle your outer-skin layer has in protecting your body from environmental assaults.

Other natural assaults, such as those from germs, bacteria, and environmental impurities, must also be prevented from getting below the skin's surface. So no matter where you live, your face contends with major stresses. More often than not, the outer layer stands up to these assaults—but at a cost: dryness, wrinkles and lines, and skin disorders. Your skin can't fight the "good fight" alone; it needs your help. *There is hope.*

MISINFORMATION

Perhaps even more disturbing than the elements our skin is exposed to is the degree to which people are misinformed. Because of their African heritage, black and dark-skinned women and men have often been led to believe that their skin is built for the sun. Though this may seem true, it is in fact not true.

Most "blacks" living in the desert, or in comparably dry, hot regions like the Sudan, almost always totally cover their bodies, leaving very little of their skin exposed to the sun. In contrast, people living in hot, humid areas are apt to wear less clothing—and rightfully so. Generally, the hot, humid areas are less industrialized and have fewer if any direct pollutants, and the humidity in the air reduces the degree to which skin moisture evaporates. People who live in very humid climates don't peel and their skin, whether black or white, often has fewer wrinkles. Their faces belie their age. The outer layer of their skin is moist and pliable, rather than dry and lined.

I've talked with women from Gabon and the Central African Republic, and they complain about how dry their skin becomes when they visit America. Their complaints have validity, since the humidity here is comparatively low. A change in climate like this can often start to affect your skin within a few days or less. So remember—whatever your color, protect your skin or you will pay for the neglect.

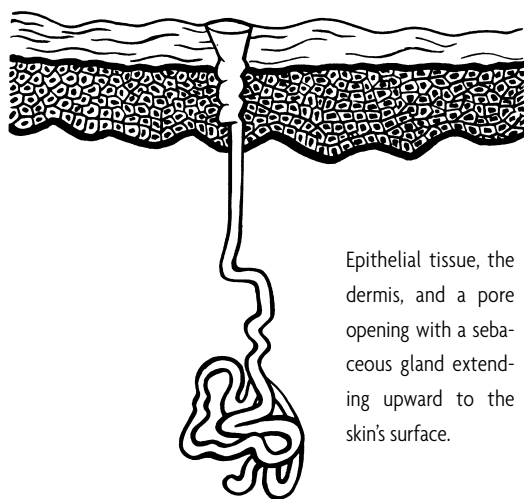
Black skin has special qualities. As I noted earlier, it has more epidermal layers than white skin. To some degree, this means greater protection from the sun, and those additional layers often help black skin to appear and feel smoother. Black skin has more melanin (the dark pigment in the epidermis), which reflects more of the sun's rays, giving greater protection and reducing

the drying process. But for all these positive qualities, black skin needs as much care as any other if it is to maintain its health and good looks.

DEVICES OF PROTECTION

Remember, there are two upper layers to the skin: the epidermis and the germination layer, which together make up the skin's essential defense system. The outer layer has two essential ingredients helping it to do its job and maintain its "looks": water and sebaceous oils. These two elements—no matter how often you may have heard that oil and water don't mix—work together beautifully to support and protect the skin.

The epidermis needs water to keep it pliable, plump, and elastic. The body supplies that water through the cells. Later I will discuss diet, but for now I mention only that you need to drink plenty of water to maintain healthy skin. The sebaceous glands produce oils that travel upward and cover the surface of the skin. The oils act as a defensive shield and a reflector, not only holding the skin's surface moisture in but also keeping the skin soft, pliable, and unbroken. However, once moisture is drawn from the outer layer, the oils cannot help restore the skin's youthful quality. Only water will do the job. If you soak a piece of dry skin in oil, for example, it will not soften. It will not soften even if you use sebaceous oil. The oil is not the softener; water is. Remember this principle when we focus on products for your skincare regimen.



Epithelial tissue, the dermis, and a pore opening with a sebaceous gland extending upward to the skin's surface.

THE GERMINATING LAYER

Beneath the epidermis is the germinating layer. Actually, this is the deepest layer of the epidermis, resting on the corium, which is also called the derma, or true skin. But the germinating layer is so different from the rest of the epidermis, and should be nurtured so differently, that I present it as though

it were a distinct layer. It consists of a single row of columnar cells in which young cells develop and move upward to the surface.

The top cells making up the germinating layer move upward while others remain, protecting the corium beneath. The germinating layer does not use water or oils to maintain itself but is nourished, by the blood circulated to the skin. This layer of cells is nourished as are cells in the rest of your body, through proper nutrients. This is why what you eat and don't eat, what you take into your system and what you don't take into it, will show in your face. What gets into your circulatory system will be seen, one way or another. Drinking alcohol will show, smoking will show, drugs will show, birth control pills will show. A healthful or poor diet will show. Your skin is an indicator of your state of health. Moreover, your state of health will either help or prevent your skin from doing its job.

THE PH DEFENSE

Those sebaceous glands have another defensive purpose besides holding in the skin's moisture. They maintain what is called an acid mantle across the skin's surface. Healthy skin is slightly acidic. It is believed that skin with a tendency toward alkalinity (the opposite of acidity) is more likely to become infected and have skin disorders. The pH factor of healthy skin (a tendency toward acidity) works as a defense by affecting the skin's ability to both ward off infection and disorders and thereby save the body from having to fight beneath the surface as well. So when you see products proclaiming to return the skin's pH factor, don't automatically accept or reject them, but know that the pH measure is important.

I have deliberately not discussed the skin's corium, or derma, since commercial products cannot affect it. Your genes, diet, and cosmetic surgery are its primary influences. So you can readily understand that the epidermis and germination layers, with the sebaceous glands, are the skin's primary, effective defense against the environment—both man-made and natural. The "falloff" defensive process of the outermost layer of the epidermis serves two vital functions: (1) the older and drier cells are removed, and as the layer of the cells falls off, (2) the environmental impurities, bacteria, and pollutants on or in them are removed.



Water Basics

- Water is something most of us take for granted. Water can keep you healthy.
- When you are dehydrated, water improves stamina immediately.
- Seventy-five percent of your body is composed of water. If you don't drink water during an active day, your thirst increases. Being thirsty and responding to that need for water are necessary so that you will flush your body with fluids to keep joints lubricated.
- Drinking water improves chronic indigestion by keeping food moving through your digestive tract.
- Water moisturizes the skin, cleanses the pores for a clear complexion, and flushes out poisons.
- Don't substitute soda, coffee, or beer for water. Medical experts advise that alcohol is absorbed into the skin and causes dehydration.
- New research studies confirm that water alleviates some asthma problems by loosening mucous in the lungs and curing the common cold.
- Types of water and their sources are important to know.

Spring water usually comes from underground springs.

Mineral water contains calcium, magnesium, iron, sodium, and other minerals.

Sparkling water is carbonated and from an underground source.

Purified water has been distilled and filtered to remove minerals and any contaminants.

This self-renewing process is ongoing, with little visible evidence when your skin is young and healthy. However, when your skin is neither young nor healthy, then the process works less effectively, with the noticeable results of lines, wrinkles, cracks, and peeling. But with help and knowledge, you can retard the aging process and keep your skin healthy and youthful-looking.

WATER—A KEY TO YOUTHFUL-LOOKING SKIN

Even though the outer layer of the skin receives a continuous supply of water from the inner layer, the amount provided is limited at any given time. Thus, the outer layer is often short of water when it may need it most. For example, if the skin's loss of water to the atmosphere exceeds its upward supply, then the skin is in danger of going dry. If you don't use a sunscreen or moisturizing guard, the extreme dry conditions in such areas as Arizona, New Mexico, and the desert in California can have a dangerous effect on your skin.

THE AGING PROCESS

If you look at the skin of an older person, particularly if it has been neglected or abused, you will find evidence of structural change. The dead, outer layer of the epidermis is thicker and therefore drier. This is partly because the epidermis of an older person begins to produce a slightly different type of cell.

Furthermore, with age these cells stick together with greater adhesion and are not shed as readily. The outer layers of dead skin begin to build up, becoming thicker and thicker atop the lower, living layers. These outer layers have not only less water or moisture in them but also less capacity to hold water. Unless their moisture capacity is increased, the outer, now thicker layer becomes dry and wrinkled. This causes crepey lines to appear, with the ends of the cells curling up, leading to roughness.

During this aging process, the oil glands decrease in function, with the decline greater in women than in men. Also, the surface guard of oil, whose function is to hold moisture in the skin, does not work as well. Without its water retention, the skin loses its pliability and softness.

SUNTANNING AND THE AGING PROCESS

Tanning is a defense the skin uses to protect its delicate inner layers. The increase in pigment, brought about through exposure to sunlight, is by and large temporary; the suntan disappears in time. However, during the aging process, there is a tendency for these pigments to increase, causing the skin to become darker and, in some instances, blotchy. These darker areas usually appear on the hands and face. Often they are called age spots or liver spots. With continued use, fade cream, gel, and lotion formulas can be an effective method to temporarily fade age spots. But spots will reappear without regular applications. Actually, these are the result of suntanning combined with the aging process. People who stay out of the sun have fewer, if any, liver spots.

LINES, WRINKLES, AND SPOTS

If you were able to take a look at the skin's lower layer—the dermis—you would notice elastic fibers. Unlike the epidermis, or outer layer, the dermis cannot regenerate itself. Any damage done to the dermis results in degeneration and the formation of scar tissue. This means there is a structural change, no matter how slight. It is this underlayer that is responsible for the resiliency of your facial skin, whether smooth and unlined or rough and wrinkled. The dermis is composed of layers of living tissue, and this tissue is permeated with elastic fibers—reinforcement rods that help keep the skin taut. If damage is done to these rods, sagging and wrinkles are often a result.

With the aging process, the underlayer has a tendency to degenerate, often causing these fibers to break into many pieces. Their supportive effec-

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Remember: when damage occurs in the dermis, in the facial area, or elsewhere, the effects are permanent. Only cosmetic surgery can rebuild or stretch the perception of new life and youth. No matter how much care is given to the face, some structural changes will occur. But these changes can be kept to a minimum with proper care and preventive treatment. This means that paying attention to both the outer and inner layers of the skin is essential.



tiveness is then gone, and the dermis is then incapable of “standing up” by itself. In some places, the structure caves in, and the outer surface falls into the crevices. These are the face's grooves, lines, and wrinkles. The skin around the eyes and on the neck is the most likely to show these aging signs first, with the rest of the face showing the effects later.

The blood vessels, which are also in the dermis, expand with age, and little capillaries may even break, causing discoloration.