

the ageing face



Your face is the first thing about you that creates an impression on others. If you feel good about your complexion, that sense of well-being colours your actions and gives you added confidence. So, taking care of your face makes very good sense...and never before has it been so easy.

The ageing process brings with it many changes, not least those to the face. Our skin cells divide more slowly and the inner layer of our skin, the dermis, begins to thin. In addition, the fat cells beneath the dermis start to atrophy, while the underlying network of elastin and collagen fibres, which provides the 'scaffolding' for the surface layers, loosens and unravels. As a result, our skin loses its elasticity; when pressed, it no longer springs back to its initial position but, rather, sags and forms furrows. Moreover, our skin's ability to retain moisture diminishes and the sweat and oil-secreting glands atrophy, depriving it of its protective water-lipid emulsions. As a consequence, our skin becomes dry and scaly.

Unfortunately, our skin's ability to repair itself diminishes with age as well, meaning that wounds heal more slowly. Frown lines (between the eyebrows) and crow's feet (lines radiating from the outer corners of the eyes) develop due to small, persistent muscle contractions. Habitual facial expressions also create characteristic lines, which contribute to the formation of jowls and drooping eyelids.

As children, we enjoy the benefits of youthful skin, never giving it a second thought. However, as we enter adolescence, some of us develop



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skin problems such as breakouts of acne, most often - and embarrassingly - on our faces. As we continue through life, our skin is regularly bombarded by environmental factors, be it sun exposure, commonly used chemicals, alcohol, cigarettes, extreme weather conditions and/or stress in general. All of these do harm, robbing our skin of its youthful texture. Finally, the elasticity we took so much for granted diminishes and our skin begins to sag.

Some environmental factors in particular - among them cigarette smoke and pollution (especially ozone) - can further accelerate the ageing process by producing 'oxygen-free radicals'. These are particles generated during many of the body's normal chemical processes. However, produced in excess they can damage cell membranes and interact with our genetic material, possibly contributing to a number of skin disorders such as wrinkles and, more importantly, cancer. Rapid weight loss can also cause wrinkles by reducing the volume of fat cells that cushion the face. If so, we look gaunt and our skin can sag.

People who smoke are especially prone to wrinkles and skin cancers. According to one study, the faces of heavy smokers are almost five times more likely to be wrinkled than those of non-smokers. In fact, heavy smokers in their 40s often have facial wrinkles more like those of non-smokers in their 60s. Results of a recent study of 25 sets of twins revealed that the skin of smokers is thinner than that of non-smokers by, in some cases, as much as 40%.

Needless to say, the best way to avoid wrinkles is a healthy lifestyle that combines daily exercise (for good circulation) with a diet rich in whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables. Being sun-smart helps too, so include sunscreen in your daily routine and wear protective clothing and hats out of doors. Reducing stress is beneficial as well - not only for your skin but also for your general health.



So, be savvy and care for your face and body! Make every day count by exercising and eating well. And, when it comes to skin care and makeup, don't clog your skin with harsh chemicals, preservatives and perfumes. Choose only quality products containing active ingredients and be rewarded with a fresh, healthy and youthful-looking.