

Natural Beauty tips for Women Over 50

More so now, than a generation ago, women aged 50 and over, are busier than ever with their careers, family and social lives. Today, we generally maintain better health and may feel fabulous, but our skin can betray how we feel, by losing its glow and developing wrinkles and spots as we age.

With age, the skin becomes progressively thinner and wrinkled through loss of cushioning (e.g. collagen and elastin). It becomes drier through a decrease in oil-production. The number of blood vessels in the skin decreases making the skin more fragile and sallow. Excessive sun exposure and smoking can certainly accelerate this ageing process. Let's have a look at what we can do to optimise our skin health.

SUN PROTECTION & AVOIDANCE

Most Australians know that excessive sun exposure (the ultraviolet part in particular) can lead to premature aging and skin cancers. Practical tips include: (1) avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when it is most damaging; (2) wear protective clothing with long-sleeves, pants and a wide-brimmed hat; and (3) use sunscreen regularly. Use of sunscreens is an important factor in keeping the skin looking young and healthy. Many moisturisers are now formulated with a sunscreen and are suitable for daily use. For optimum protection outdoors, sun screens should be applied liberally (thin coats are less protective) and at frequent intervals.

MOISTURISERS

Skin dryness is exceedingly common after 40. moisturisers help maintain your skin's natural moisture levels. They work by providing a seal over your skin to keep water from escaping or by slowly releasing water into your skin. During the day, use a moisturiser with a sun protection factor (SPF), of at least 15, to help protect your skin from damaging ultraviolet rays. If you have sensitive skin, look for products free of dyes, perfumes or other additives. If your skin is very dry, you may need a greasy moisturiser, while those with oily skin may be better off with a light or oil-free moisturiser or may not need one at all. A cheap moisturiser will often do the same job as an expensive one!

SMOKING

Smokers have more wrinkles than non-smokers. Cigarette smoke releases free radicals that damages elastic fibres and collagen in the skin and contribute to premature wrinkling. Nicotine also causes small blood vessels and capillaries to contract, diminishing circulation and depriving the skin of nutrients. In addition, the repetitive facial expressions you make when smoking such as pursing your lips when inhaling and squinting your eyes to keep out smoke may contribute to wrinkles.



NUTRITION & SUPPLEMENTS

What you eat affects every organ in the body and your skin is no exception. A balanced diet is essential for maintaining healthy skin. Make sure you drink at least 1L of water a day. It may not produce striking rejuvenation, but neglecting it will make your skin age considerably faster. Deficiencies of certain nutrients, such as vitamin A, B-complex, C, zinc and essential fatty acids are known to cause various forms of dermatitis and other skin conditions.

In addition, anti-oxidants in dietary intake can counter harmful free-radicals that are produced from UV radiation, cigarette smoking, air pollution, stress and alcohol. Antioxidants occur naturally in the body but can also be supplemented by diet, oral supplements and topical lotions. For example the following foods are rich in antioxidants: avocados, green tea, sweet potatoes, blueberries, walnuts and tuna. Supplementary antioxidants found in cosmetic and oral products include Vitamins A, C and E. Calcium and Vit D supplements are particularly important if we are not able to obtain sufficient Vitamin D through natural sun exposure.

*By Adrian Lim,
cosmetic dermatologist, FACD*