



DOES SHE LOOK LIKE SHE NEEDS TO WORRY ABOUT WRINKLES?

The skincare industry insists your millennial skin is withering as we speak and you must act *now*. Well, should you? asks Ingeborg van Lotringen >

LOOK OUT, GEN Y:

Beauty brands are making a play for your faces. Aware as they are of how hyper-informed and photo-ready you are, the days of being left to your own devices with some moisturiser and a cleansing wipe are long gone. Noticeable lines may seem a lifetime away, but 'collagen production begins to stall in your twenties,' says, well, just about everyone. Clinique's orange-tubed Pep-Start Eye Cream is the first of an age-defying franchise aimed at twenty-somethings. Origins is expanding its successful Original Skin range, squarely targeting so-dubbed 'quarter-lifers' who, they say, "demand high-performance products to sort out discolouration and dullness issues". Even 'cosmeceutical' brand Skinceuticals offers a serious emulsion (with an equally serious £96 price tag) "to correct the early signs of photoageing". I could go on. Of course your skin will have issues it didn't when you were a toddler. But does that mean you should splash the cash on problems that are just starting? Or can you smell a marketing rat?

DANGER, DANGER!

Skincare companies tell us twenty-something skins are besieged like never before by pollution, stress, and hard living. "Air pollution is on the up, with soot, exhaust fumes and gases all proven to exacerbate inflammation, wrinkles, age spots and acne," says Professor Jean Krutmann of the Leibniz Research Institute for Environmental Medicine in Germany. "Ultrafine toxic particles in gases are especially damaging and we are now heavily exposed to those in big European cities."

Add in a thinning ozone layer and UV radiation's nasty habit of turning extra-destructive when mixed with pollutants and you have a wickedly toxic

mix. "It all contributes to a general speeding up of the ageing process," says Kiehl's UK consulting dermatologist Alexis Granite. "But I wouldn't say this is specifically prevalent in younger skins." It's not just you, all of us are rusting away in a cloud of carbon monoxide and it's happening faster than ever.

Stress and fast living are other scourges that would blight any skin, but do they affect millennials significantly more than they did their mothers? No dermatologist I spoke to

for this feature knows of any studies confirming this but circumstantial evidence is starting to appear.

"Increasing numbers of twenty-something patients suffer from patchy red skin and adult acne, largely due to stress and on-the-go diets high in processed foods and sugar," says GP and cosmetic doctor Rabia Malik. "Social media is making them more aware of it: they complain of 'signs of ageing' that thwart the 'soft-focus, camera-ready' skin they're after."

The desire to be up for a selfie at all times may also be the cause of the over-use of a sneaky and little-known ageing agent: self-tan. Its active ingredient, DHA, turns skin brown by oxidising its top layer, creating a surge of damaging free radicals that essentially kill off the cells there. "My advice would be to treat self tan as a holiday option rather than a daily ritual," says Sally Penford, education manager at the International Dermal Institute.

Truth be told, millennials' hyper-awareness of flaws, real or perceived, has boosted make-up sales and even changed the way products are made and tested. Should we be surprised skincare wants a piece of the action?

THE KIDS ARE ALL RIGHT

To be fair, brands are happy to admit it. "We are positioning Pep as the choice for the image-conscious, instant-fix generation," says Clinique's product development vice

president Eileen Higgins. "It's all about products that look good, work fast, are simple to use, affordable and sit well under make-up." The hero ingredients are peptides, well-established anti-agers that "can repair damage in all skin types before it even surfaces".

Is that an attractive proposition to the 'instant-fix' generation? My entirely unscientific snap poll of team *Cosmopolitan's* under-30 squad suggests it might be, kinda. Maybe. "I don't really believe anti-ageing products do anything," is the common refrain. "But I'll probably buy some just in case."

What does transpire is that these women are skincare-aware in a way that at 25 I definitely was not. "In reality, a good daily routine,

'The need to be ready for a selfie has made us all hyper-critical'

SPE, healthy diet and plenty of water are the answer," says Claire. "I've grown up with my mum smothering me in sun lotion, so I know to look after my skin," says Natasha. "I've been moisturising since I was >



No sooner have you eBayed your Barbie, you're slapping on the moisturiser

20; I think it'll stave off wrinkles," says Cat. "I would rather invest in skincare now that it is preventative," adds Laura. Their views all support a point made by the amusingly named Art Pellegrino, research and development chief at Elizabeth Arden.

"Millennials are the first generation in history to have used suncare all their lives, spurred on by mothers who knew what to do," he says. "They've grown up with the notion that prevention is better than cure when it comes to skincare. It's led to a focus on skin health from a young age that could well make them the best-looking generation ever."

SKIN PRESCRIPTIONS

That's a prediction most skin pros think might come to pass, provided you worship at the altar of prevention.

"Starting on age-preventative skincare in your twenties will stave off the onset of age-related skin changes," says dermatologist Stefanie Williams.

"Your two most important 'age-defying' choices are a high-grade antioxidant serum with SPF30 or more."

Using the right products consistently from as early as you can won't just keep your skin looking younger. It will be healthier as well, meaning fewer breakouts, less eczema and sensitivity. But much like pink razors 'for girls,' they don't need to come in a 'my generation'-shaped tube; we're on-message – forewarned really is forearmed.

Change it up

So here's what you need to know now for a beauty regime that'll keep you looking fresh forever (well, for a whole lot longer anyway...)

1 SLS-FREE CLEANSER
Avoiding soap and facial cleanser featuring sodium lauryl sulphate or sodium laureth sulphate (check the ingredients) will save your skin. Cleansing is a must, but so is preserving your lipid barrier, which protects skin from dehydration, inflammation and disease. SLS detergents will strip it, leading to problems including premature ageing.

2 BARRIER BUILDERS
Increasingly, a top-notch lipid barrier (also called acid mantle) is seen as the key to problem-free, age-defying skin. It consists of lipids (there's a surprise) and delightful healthy bacteria; helping these proliferate will build a self-hydrating, self-protecting ecosystem. Look for essential fatty acids, niacinamide (vitamin B3) and pre- and probiotic complexes.

3 21ST-CENTURY HYDRATION
Being 70% water, it stands to reason that skin doesn't function properly if it's dehydrated. But, says facialist Debbie Thomas: "Dumping a heavy cream on your face may make it look plumper on the surface but can make skin lazy, slowing down its own moisture production in the deeper layers." Short-chain hyaluronic acid and glycerin are oil-free, weightless skin quenchers that stimulate the self-hydrating process. They're ideal for oily skins *and* just as effective on dry ones.

4 ACIDS
Skin's cell renewal process gets lazy in your twenties, so you need to ramp it up. A toner, cleanser or mild daily peel with gentle AHAs such as lactic or mandelic acid will make a huge difference. Opt for serums with glucosamine, salicylic acid and niacinamide to maintain your youthful glow.

5 THE BIG THREE
Vitamins A, C and E are the antioxidants best-proved by science and loved by experts. Add as many others as you like (via green tea, lycopene...); the wider the variety the better, as they all rugby-tackle different murderous free radicals. Your in-built stash of antioxidants begins to deplete – you guessed it – in your twenties, so you need these bad boys. ♦

Skin-vestment pieces for generation ageless

Elizabeth Arden Superstart Skin Renewal Booster, £45 A barrier builder with essential fatty acids and antioxidants

Origins Original Skin, £32 Serum that speeds up cell renewal and soothes stressed skin

Gallinée La Culture Foaming Facial Cleanser, £14 SLS-free and full of prebiotics

Dr Dennis Gross Alpha Beta Ultra Gentle Daily Peel, £70 30 once-a-day AHA wipes for brighter skin

Clinique Pep-Start Eye Cream, £22 A quenching peptide bomb for tired (read: morning-after) eyes

Skinceuticals Metacell Renewal B3, £96 Deep hydration with loads of niacinamide and peptides

Olay Total Effects Featherweight Moisturiser, £14.99 Similar to Metacell at a fraction of the price

Garnier Moisture Bomb Night, £7.99 Glycerin and antioxidants 'penetrate up to 10 layers of skin for the ultimate quench'



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