

Thinking About Cosmetic Surgery? Try These 6 Things First

You'll need more than cosmetics for great-looking skin and a lovely appearance. You'll need to understand the health and beauty connection.

Beauty truly does radiate from within. A healthy, vibrant woman defies age. As a testimony and reflection of our self-esteem, inner beauty and vibrancy, true beauty is the result of inner vitality, balance, health and happiness—not vanity.

Optimal nutrition, stress-relieving exercise and a positive frame of mind are requirements you must tote along on your continued journey toward complete balance. A balanced body and a beautiful spirit are better than the very best cosmetic application or surgery.

With proper nutrition, rest, relaxation and exercise, you can keep your body balanced, healthy and youthful throughout your entire life. Your skin can be wrinkle-free and elastic, your eyes can sparkle, your complexion can be smooth, and your face can be firm and tight.

When it comes to aging, there are two choices: you either embrace it, or you try to erase it with cosmetic procedures. However, you can begin feeling and looking better—and younger—if you're willing to make simple lifestyle changes and adjust your health and beauty regimen.

Skin Sins

Your appearance will start changing for the better soon after you begin eliminating these harmful habits that are taking a toll on your skin and overall well-being:

Sun exposure. Nothing ages you faster and is more damaging to your skin than sun exposure. However, you can prevent sun damage by wearing sunscreen whenever you leave the house.

You should wear at least SPF-15. Wear SPF-30 if you are a golfer or if you spend time at the beach. Sunscreen not only protects you from future sun damage, it can also help reverse past damage because, with protection, your skin gets a chance to repair itself. If possible, stay covered or out of the sun completely between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Lack of sleep. I consider sleep to be the best beauty vitamin in the entire world. Nighttime is when your body repairs itself. This includes your skin. Collagen and elastin are replaced and new cells are built, thereby erasing the previous day's exposure to sun and environmental toxins.

Your skin is more absorbent and receptive at night, so it is a perfect time to moisturize and add topical vitamin treatments. Lack of sleep will cut these benefits, leaving you with dark circles, puffiness, sallowness and even pimples.

Stress increases the levels of adrenal hormones, such as testosterone, which can trigger acne. Stress hormones can also cause your blood flow to be directed away from your limbs and major organs, leaving your skin crying out for the nutrients it needs.

When you are stressed, it is harder to repair your complexion with skin care. Stressed skin simply does not respond to treatments as well as relaxed skin. Practice deep breathing, exercise and/or take a tub bath with lavender essential oils to help de-stress your body, mind and spirit.

Lack of exercise. Exercise boosts oxygen in your blood and in turn improves your skin tone. Exercise also increases your tolerance to stress and helps you sleep, which will boost your skin health as well. For optimal skin health, try to do three sets of 20 minutes of exercise each week. Try cycling, walking

at a good pace, swimming and running, if your joints are healthy.

Caffeine. Every cup of coffee you drink needs three cups of water to process through your system. Caffeine is very dehydrating to the skin. In addition, it increases your level of stress hormones, which can lead to poor skin health.

Smoking is the second most damaging thing you can do to your skin, second only to sun exposure. The nicotine found in cigarettes constricts the blood vessels in your face, making your skin look gray or sallow.

A chemical in cigarettes, acetaldehyde, attacks the fiber in your skin that holds it together. Factor in the constant creasing and wrinkling of the eyes due to smoke irritation and the pursing of your lips, and you have all the ingredients for looking 10 years older than women who do not smoke. The good news is that quitting before the age of 30 returns your body to the level of a nonsmoker within 10 years—and that includes your skin.

Alcohol dilates blood vessels, leading to broken veins. Like cigarettes, alcohol also contains acetaldehyde, which attacks skin fibers and reduces elasticity and firmness. In addition, alcohol robs the body of vitamin C, a key nutrient for healthy skin.

More Than Meets the Eye

In today's world, the skin care and cosmetic surgery industry is booming and has become one of the largest, most profitable industries in America. Like women before us, we are on a constant search for the latest and greatest botanical, liposomal, antioxidant, exfoliant or hydrator in the world to make us appear more beautiful with skin that is visibly younger and smoother.

The fact remains that even in our advanced generation, beautiful skin is so much more than skin deep. Yes, there are lunchtime peels, microdermabrasion, laser resurfacing, and other techniques to smooth and erase fine lines, but it is an undeniable fact that beautiful skin is still the result of a healthy, toxin-free body.

When we are young, our skin is soft, supple and glowing. Beautiful skin comes naturally in our youth. But, as we age, beautiful skin is a reward for taking proper care of our bodies. The skin is a barometer that reflects what is going on with us internally. Skin care is big business these days as baby boomers anxiously take part in staving off the signs of aging.

Stress, excessive sun exposure, liver malfunction, hormone depletion, smoking, alcohol, sugar, fried foods, caffeine and poor circulation all contribute to the condition of our skin. Age spots, wrinkles, dry skin, uneven skin tone, sallow complexion and acne are the result of how well our systems handle wastes.

For healthy, glowing skin, the following simple practices will greatly benefit you:

Skin Care Therapy

- Drink eight to 10 glasses of water each day.
- Add fresh lemon for added benefit.
- Make a fresh "liver cocktail" each day (use a juicer). The juice consists of 2 ounces of beet juice, 3 ounces of carrot juice and 3 ounces of cucumber juice.
- Avoid sugars, caffeine and red meat to prevent dehydration.
- Eat fresh fruit and vegetables each day; fruits are wonderful cleaners.

Body Therapy

- Reduce or prevent wrinkles by rubbing papaya skins on the face. (Papain is an enzyme that exfoliates the skin.)
- Manage stress.
- Practice deep breathing.
- Have a massage with almond oil, sesame oil or wheat germ oil to soften the skin.
- Moisturize immediately after bathing.
- Rub lemon juice on age spots or use 2 percent hydroquinone topical cream to reduce and fade age spots.
- Limit sun exposure and always use a sunblock SPF-15 or more to prevent further damage and to prevent age spots from darkening.

It's a Beautiful Life

True beauty comes from the inner woman—her essence, her spirit. A truly beautiful woman possesses a radiance that cannot be duplicated by the most skilled plastic surgeon or the most expensive topical beauty serum.

People naturally gravitate toward beauty. Think of nature—how we all are drawn to pick a beautiful flower, or to at least pause to smell and admire the beauty of a fragrant rose. We are drawn because we instinctively know that flowers are beautiful inside and out. We pick them not only for their visual beauty, but also for their sweet essence. And so it goes for woman. True beauty comes from our very essence.

The Bible tells us, “Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

The most beautiful woman I have ever known had an essence that drew men and women alike. Although her outward appearance would never suggest that she had such magnetism, her essence

captured the hearts of those around her.

She was loyal, confident, strong, unselfish, dependable, unassuming, loving, a best friend, humorous, humble and gentle. She gave of herself, never sought approval, and she had faith and a sense of her true worth.

The beauty guidelines I have given you focus mainly on the outward appearance. But in order to experience beauty throughout your lifetime, you must cultivate it from within. Let it flow through you each day.

Live a beautiful life—let beauty radiate from your body, mind and spirit. Physical beauty is only skin deep and fades with the passing of time. But true beauty comes from your core and leaves a lasting impression.

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