

Ask Dr. Mikell

By Dr. Oswald Mikell

Dr. Oswald Mikell, MD • Dermatology Associates of the Lowcountry

American Board of Dermatology | American Board of Cosmetic Surgery | Physician of the Year 2008

Skin Care 101

Since school here in the Lowcountry is back in session, it seems an appropriate time to discuss the basics of skin care. If you are like most of us, you're probably overwhelmed by all the commercials, advertisements, and the mass sea of lotions on the drug store shelves - all claiming to make your skin look so much better. Don't let that confuse you - skin care can be simple.

Q: How many steps do you recommend for proper skin care?

A: Good skin care involves only 3 basic steps:

1. Cleansing
2. Moisturizing
3. Using Sunscreen

Q: Is it important to use a specific cleanser?

A: Many people don't know that their choice of cleanser could actually be hurting their skin. Dry skin can be caused by cleansing routines. The first step is to understand your cleanser options, and choose the mildest cleanser possible that still removes dirt, oil and debris.

- Bar soaps - the most irritating cleansers - but the best to get rid of dirt and grime
- Liquid cleansers - a wide variety of tolerability - good for cleaning all but the oiliest skin
- Facial cleansers - the mildest cleanser - but may not remove oil and dirt as well

Q: Why do I need to moisturize?

A: A good moisturizer can stop the dry skin cycle from spiraling into cracked, thick, flaky skin. And - it can replenish the skin's natural ingredients that help maintain its structure, cut down on damage from free-radicals, and help the cells to function more normally.

Q: Isn't one moisturizer the same as the next?

A: No, not all skin is the same, and not all moisturizers are the same. There are many moisturizers for specific needs such as: dry skin, oily skin, normal skin, acne-prone skin, red skin, sensitive skin, and there are moisturizers with sunscreen. You should choose a moisturizer based on your skin's needs.

Q: I get so confused when I see all the ingredients.

Choosing a moisturizer with good ingredients for your skin is important. New state-of-the-art moisturizers are based on a complex science offering different options.

For example:

- Glycerol - helps water and other moisturizer ingredients penetrate the skin to get where they are needed.
- Ceramides - help replenish the skin's natural oils.
- Hydroxy Acids - help with exfoliation of dead skin cells
- Niacinamide - helps the skin produce more natural oils, and may also help reverse the signs of sun-damaged skin, like brown spots and blotchiness

Once you're in the routine of cleansing and moisturizing, don't undo all those benefits by exposing your face to UV radiation. Find a good broad-spectrum sunscreen and make its application a part of your daily routine. If you have any skin irregularities that are concerning you – or if you want to explore procedures to further freshen your look – call Dermatology Associates of the Lowcountry today and schedule a consult (843) 689-5259.