

Looking after your skin as a teenager

What Dermatologists want you to know

It's completely normal to think about appearance, beauty & skincare as you get older. But as your skin changes, it can be hard to figure out exactly what skincare to use. Your skin is a vital organ of your body. It can be damaged by the wrong products or not enough protection.

Importantly we all have different types of skin. Some people will have skin conditions such as acne, eczema, hidradenitis or psoriasis. These conditions are not your fault, they are largely due to genetic tendencies.

This information should help you understand & care for your skin whatever type of skin you have. BUT please know there are treatments and support available whatever you are struggling with - so do seek advice if needed.



Online it might seem like everyone has flawless skin & uses loads of products, Many images are filtered & content is often trying to sell you stuff.

What do I need for my face?

Simple routines are usually best. Overloading skin with products can cause irritation & worsen acne. Work out what YOUR skin needs rather than following trends.

Cleanse (wash)

- Wash your face once or twice daily with cleanser suited to your skin. Foaming cleansers for oily skins, gel/creams if dry.
- Avoid cleansing oils/ balms which can clog.
- You don't need double cleansing, cleansing cloths or brushes.

Moisturise

- Use moisturiser if skin feels dry or tight.
- Even oily skins may need moisturiser. Use gels or lotions if oily, creams if dry.
- Look for 'non-comedogenic' products which won't block pores. Avoid heavy natural oils like coconut oil, olive oil, cocoa butter.

SPF -Sun protection

- In the UK from April- October, sun is strong enough to damage skin. Use SPF 30 or above on exposed skin in these months.

? How do I know what brands to use? ?

- *Choose gentle products with clear labelling
- *Focus on products that have a purpose rather than just look or smell appealing.
- *Pick a reasonable budget & stick to it. More expensive products are not necessarily better.

Make up: choose oil-free formulations which won't block your pores.

Remove it at the end of the day with reusable pads & a gentle make up remover, then cleanse. Avoid disposable wipes.

What if I'm breaking out?

- Breakouts, spots & acne are really common in teenagers. Hormones change the way skin produces oil (sebum).
- This doesn't mean you have to just put up with it.
- Over-the-counter products may help mild spots.
- Avoid picking or squeezing - this can make it worse & increase risk of scarring.
- If acne is painful, scarring or affecting confidence, see a pharmacist, GP or dermatologist.

? Useful Ingredients

Salicylic acid

- Helps unblock pores.
- Comes in different forms eg washes, creams, toners & spot patches.
- Start slowly & increase only if your skin feels ok.

Benzoyl Peroxide

- Anti-bacterial.
- Can be drying at first - introduce gradually
- Wash may suit sensitive skin better than leave-on cream
- Bleaches fabrics but not skin



Products to avoid

(unless you've been told to use by a healthcare professional)

- Anti-ageing products
- Retinol
- Peels
- Strong exfoliants
- Vitamin C
- Lightening creams

Stop using a product if it causes redness, peeling, swelling or a rash.

What about my body skin?

During puberty, body smell, sweating & scalp oiliness can become more noticeable.

Daily washing with a gentle, pH-balanced shower gel & changing clothes regularly can help.

Deodorants reduce or mask body odour, while anti-perspirants reduce how much you sweat & may be more helpful if you sweat a lot.

More odour around genitals is also normal. For girls, wash the vulval skin (visible part of the genitals) with your usual shower gel. Avoid washing inside the vagina, even with cleansers labelled as 'feminine washes' as they disrupt the healthy environment & actually make smell worse.

In boys, the foreskin should be gently pulled back & the skin of the penis cleansed.

For flaky or itchy scalps, anti-dandruff shampoo containing tar, salicylic acid or piroctone olamine can help.



Your skin in the sun

- It's good for us to be outside & the sun can have benefits. But too much is harmful.
- Excessive sun exposure & sun burn can contribute to skin cancer & early skin aging.
- If your skin burns gets, red or blistered in the sun, this is a sign of skin cell damage.
- Your skin has a long memory, so damage you get in your teens can show up years later.
- Sun protection is still important in brown or black skin, particularly if you get breakouts or dark marks (hyperpigmentation).
- Use SPF 30 or higher when in direct sunlight & reapply every 2-3 hours & after swimming.
- Hats, clothing & shade are important, especially between 11am-3pm.
- Don't use tanning beds.
- Avoid smoking & vaping - these are another cause of skin damage and photoaging.

People with very light skin (red or blond hair, freckles) are at highest risk of sun damage. But sun protection is important in all skin tones.

Body hair

Increased body hair is normal.
It's fine to leave your hair.

If shaving, use a clean razor & a shaving foam/gel. Shaving can cause itchy bumps, more common if you have curly or coily hair.

Did you know?

Hair, lashes & nails are an extension of your skin.

Gel, acrylic nails & some nail glues can contain acrylates - a common cause of life long skin allergies.

Redness, swelling & eczema around nails or even eyelids/ face can be signs of an allergy.

Reactions can happen wherever nails are done, but risk is higher with home kits/ people not properly trained.

Hair dyes & black henna tattoos can cause irritation or allergy, especially around scalp, hairline, ears & neck.

Artificial eyelashes including those that have been glued on by a professional can also cause allergies & irritation.

If a nail, lash or hair product causes burning, itching, swelling or rash, stop using it and seek medical advice.

How do you feel about your skin?

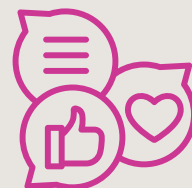
Social media & celebrity culture can make us feel pressure to have "perfect" 'flawless' skin.

This can affect confidence, self-esteem & body image.

Filters, editing & lighting can also lead to unrealistic expectations of how our skin should look.

Skin changes like open pores, oiliness, blackheads & acne are really common & not usually solved by expensive products. Viral ingredients or skincare trends may be entertaining to watch, but be very cautious about buying anything online, especially anything labelled as a "miracle" or "magic". Remember there is no such thing as 'perfect' skin. We all need to be better at accepting OUR skin & not judging other people by their skin.

If skin concerns are making you anxious, affecting your mood, stopping you from going out, or leading you to avoid mirrors, photos or social situations, speak to a parent, carer, GP or other trusted adult.



If you want to find out more about skin, visit <https://bad.org.uk> or <https://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk>