

## 9 Ways to Prep Your Skin for Fall

By Michele Bender, Special to LifescryptPublished October 03, 2010

*When fall hits, your wardrobe gets a cold-weather update. Beauty routines should too. It's time to dial down sunscreen and bring in heavy-duty moisturizer. Here's how to prep skin for the seasonal chill...*

In autumn, the air is colder outside, hotter inside and less humid everywhere – all can dry out skin and hair. At the same time, you're probably still feeling the moisture-stripping effects of summer exposure to UV rays, chlorine and salt water.

“Colder temperatures, low humidity, wind, high indoor heat and hot showers make skin and hair react differently than they do during summer months,” explains Francesca Fusco, M.D., assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City.

Fortunately, getting your glow back doesn't require a major overhaul, just a few tweaks to your current routine. Here are 9 tips from top dermatologists for a healthy look all season.

### **1. Choose a heavyweight facial moisturizer.**

Thicker sweaters aren't the only thing to pile on this fall. A heavier moisturizer will also shield skin from colder weather, says Mary Lupo, M.D., clinical professor of dermatology at Tulane University in New Orleans.

What should you look for? Moisturizers in jars, rather than bottles. That's where you're likely to find creamier, more emollient products.

And just like with clothing, layering is important to protect skin.

Apply a serum with hyaluronic acid, an element of your skin's natural hydrating system, before moisturizer to amp up its efficacy, Fusco suggests.

To make them penetrate better, **exfoliate** the top layer of dry, dead skin before applying, Lupo adds.

### **2. Dial down your sunscreen.**

Even if you're not baking on the beach, you need to protect skin from UV rays.

“Sun damage accumulates over time, and you can even get it in the dead of winter,” says Brooke Jackson, M.D., founder of the Skin Wellness Center of Chicago.

But unless you're going to be outside for hours, you can use a moisturizer with SPF rather than a designated sunscreen.

**Look for one that protects against both UVA and UVB rays.** Apply it from your hairline to the top of your chest, and dab some around the eyes where skin is thinner and easily damaged.

### **3. Fade those summer spots.**

Even if you were diligent about sunscreen this summer, you may have ended the season with a few more freckles, brown spots, patches of pigmentation (called melasma) and broken capillaries than when it started.

These marks may become more obvious as your tan fades.

Freckles disappear on their own once you're not spending as much time in the sun, but brown spots and melasma usually don't fade completely.

Treat these with daily application of over-the-counter products that contain licorice, vitamin C, kojic acid, soy or retinol, and once a week use an at-home microdermabrasion kit or glycolic acid peel.

"These can help even discoloration by exfoliating off some pigmentation," says Jeannette Graf, M.D., assistant clinical professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and author of *Stop Aging, Start Living* (Three Rivers Press).

If these steps don't do the trick, a dermatologist can perform in-office therapies, such as intense pulsed light and laser treatments, along with peels.

"These treatments also work for broken capillaries, which you can't do much about at home," Fusco says.

### **4. Make lotion more effective.**

Dry, itchy skin is the top complaint in fall, Jackson says.

Besides summer skin sins and plummeting temperatures, she blames our tendency to drink less water and take longer, hotter showers in colder months. Soothe sore skin by switching to moisturizing body washes and slathering on lotion right after a bath or shower, while skin is still damp. This helps seal in moisture, Lupo explains.

For really parched skin, keep a humidifier humming and take a 5- to 10-minute soak in an oatmeal bath. Oatmeal contains fats and proteins that help restore the skin's barrier, which breaks down when weather is dry, Fusco says.

Already drinking 8 eight-ounce glasses of water a day to stay hydrated? With exercise, you may need more.

### **5. Watch for skin reactions.**

Most skin conditions, including rosacea, psoriasis, eczema and dandruff, act up with seasonal changes.

"These conditions – and just about every other chronic condition we see in dermatology – has some immune basis, so they flare up when your immune system is lowered," Jackson says. "This happens in cold weather, which our bodies may experience as a stressor."

Life's other stresses – long hours at work, illness, flu – can also trigger them, she adds.

So try to keep your life as stress-free as possible, with activities that calm you – whether exercise, a date night with your mate or a quiet hour sipping coffee.

If the tips above for treating dry skin don't soothe these conditions, talk to your doctor, or see a dermatologist, about prescription options that lessen the duration or frequency of flare-ups. Clothing choices can also offer

relief.

“Wool can cause an irritant dermatitis [also known as contact dermatitis], so opt for cotton or wear a thin, silky T-shirt under wool,” Fusco says.

A cotton T-shirt will also wick away perspiration, which can irritate skin.

“For heavier clothing that’s washable, use a hypoallergenic detergent,” Fusco adds. Look for it on the label.

## **6. Slough off dead skin.**

Combine already dry skin with patches of pigmentation, and the result is a dull, drab complexion.

The solution: Exfoliation, which removes the dead, outer layer of skin cells that cause dullness, Fusco says.

This is especially important as you get older, since the skin’s ability to slough off dead skin slows down with each birthday.

Gently exfoliate with a creamy scrub made of beads. Skip the ones that use nuts, pits or ground shells, which can irritate and tear skin, especially when it’s dry.

Retinoids, chemical compounds derived from vitamin A, can also help speed up cell turnover and brighten up your face.

If skin is sensitive, look for an over-the-counter product with retinol, which converts to retinoic acid in the skin just like a prescription product does, but can be less irritating.

If skin isn’t easily irritated, see a dermatologist for a prescription retinoid like Retin-A or Renova.

Either way, start slowly: Use a pea-size amount all over your face every other day, working up to daily use. Apply it at night, because retinoids make skin more sun-sensitive. Also, skin temperature is higher in the evening, which helps it penetrate better.

## **7. Revive limp locks.**

The same sun sins that left your skin looking drab can leave hair frizzy and fried in autumn, especially if it’s curly.

Why? Curly hair “by nature is drier than other hair types,” says Lorraine Massey, co-owner of Devachan Salons in New York and author of the upcoming *Curly Girl: The Handbook* (Workman Publishing).

A deep-conditioning treatment at least once or twice a week helps restore hair’s luster. Leave it on for 10-20 minutes.

“Even better, leave it in overnight to soften and hydrate hair while you sleep,” Massey says. Cover with a towel or silk scarf if you’re worried about staining your pillows.

In your daily hair-care routine, use conditioner and avoid high heat from blow dryers and flat irons, which further damage hair.

Instead, choose a low setting or, better yet, let hair dry naturally. If ends appear split and frayed, a trim can breathe new life into your hair.

## **8. Protect your pucker.**

Like all skin, lips get drier in winter and can develop painful cracks if you don’t keep them hydrated with lip balm, Fusco says.

Resist the urge to lick your lips to hydrate them; it just makes them more parched. Saliva evaporates off the lip surface, taking moisture from the lips with it. **9. Go on pimple patrol.**

If you're breaking out in the fall, you're not alone. Acne is common this time of year, as a result of frequent perspiration and application of sunscreen in the summer.

"Superficial clogging of pores leads to small pimples on your face and back, arms and shoulders," Fusco says. They can keep appearing weeks after summer.

Also, as damaging as UV rays are, "they can subtly improve acne, so when you're spending less time in the sun, it may seem worse," she adds.

A cleanser that contains salicylic acid will kill bacteria and unclog pores. For spot treatments, choose a product that contains salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide.

If over-the-counter options don't work, see a dermatologist for a prescription product at a higher concentration.

And don't over-wash skin – this dries it out, and the skin's response is to make more pore-clogging oil.

Also, remember mom's advice: Don't pick, pop or play with pimples. This can cause scarring, infections or dark spots of pigmentation (called post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation) that can take months to fade.

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