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Take 5 years off your face

Dermatologists share secrets for fighting dullness, lines and dark spots

By Lisa Cohen



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It's been said that you can get a glimpse of your future face by taking a look at your mother. But today, an array of anti-aging options proves that the adage is no longer true — or at least that it doesn't have to be. Cutting-edge [skin care](#) and dermatologist-office procedures are allowing us to anti-age on a daily basis, granting tighter, more even-toned skin not only weeks from now, but decades down the road.

Once the only way to turn back the clock, surgical procedures are decreasing, the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery in Los Alamitos, California, notes. And nonsurgical alternatives are up. (Use of Botox has increased 283 percent since 2002, with docs now doling out 3.8 million injections a year.) That's no surprise, given the upside: less pain, recovery time and cost, plus noticeable results. Beyond professional treatments, [over-the-counter options](#) get more sophisticated by the season.

SELF talked to experts and scoured the skin-care industry to bring you the best at-home options and their counterparts in the doc's office. Pinpoint your issue, choose the right solution, and get ready for decades more of [gorgeous skin](#).

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Complexion complaint: Dull skin, rough texture

Fix it in your M.D.'s office. A high-grade glycolic peel is “a very safe and effective treatment for achieving a smooth texture,” says Kenneth Beer, M.D., author of Palm Beach [Perfect Skin](#) (MDPublish.com). The painted-on acid dissolves the buildup of complexion-dulling skin cells, revealing a radiant glow. The highest strength — about 60 percent — causes redness and peeling for a week; half the strength, however, can get the job done in roughly four treatments with minimal irritation. Expect to pay around \$150 per treatment.

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Fix it in your bathroom. Acid-based at-home peels can be irritating and complicated with their multiple steps. The kinder, one-step option: resurfacing serums made with dead-skin dissolvers such as glucosamine (a sugar) and arginine (derived from brown rice). They're meant to be used every day, perking up skin in a month or so. Apply at night after cleansing, before [moisturizing](#). And skip scrubs to avoid skin sensitivity.

Complexion complaint: Lines and wrinkles

Fix them in your M.D.'s office. When it comes to minimizing the look of creases, injectable skin smoothers are the most effective solutions. Botox is best for ironing out fine lines between

Beautiful skin habits

The best products and procedures can't prevent skin from aging if you live unhealthily. Here's what 10 top derms say are the secrets to looking young:

- Apply SPF 15 sunscreen or higher. Use a broad-spectrum version every day, even on cloudy days. (If it's light outside, you need it.)
- Guzzle H₂O. Drink 2 liters of water throughout the day. Skip caffeine, which dehydrates skin, emphasizing wrinkles.
- Don't smoke. Avoid secondhand smoke.
- Get your beauty sleep. Shoot for eight hours of shut-eye every night.



your brows; the muscle-relaxing formula even prevents new lines from forming, Dr. Beer

— Eat antioxidants. Each day, munch on at least 1 cup of richly colored vegetables and fruit (such as greens and blueberries) to fight the effects of environmental damage.

says. A filler such as Juvéderm can instantly plump deeper wrinkles (the folds around your mouth, say); it resupplies skin with hyaluronic acid (your natural supply diminishes with age), which keeps collagen and elastin supple. Want to take the plunge? Get used to having a needle in your face every four to six months and paying \$300 to \$800 a pop.

Fix them in your bathroom. Topical peptides may help smooth out fine lines by sending a signal to the nerves to slow down muscle movement. Instead of creams, choose new, more potent serums that form an invisible covering on skin, maximizing absorption. (You'll see patch in the name, such as YSL's, at left.) For deeper furrows, choose a cream made with hyaluronic acid (look for [sodium hyaluronate](#) or hyaluronate spheres, used in products by Olay and L'Oréal, at left). It penetrates the skin and draws moisture into the upper layers to temporarily fill wrinkles, Dr. Beer says. Use either product on freshly cleansed skin so nothing blocks absorption.

Complexion complaint: Freckles and age spots

Fix them in your M.D.'s office. Brown spots result from overactive pigment cells damaged by UV rays. Traditionally, retinoids (which speed up cell turnover and even out skin) or hydroquinone (a skin lightener) were prescribed as faders. But docs now suggest prescription retinoid and hydroquinone for faster, more dramatic effects. There are drawbacks, though: "Both cause serious dryness for the first month, plus sun sensitivity," Dr. Beer says. Wear a hat.

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Fix them in your bathroom. Free radicals attack healthy pigment cells, resulting in dark patches. Green tea has been praised as one of the most powerful antioxidants, neutralizing the offenders and preventing their aging effects. But other more potent, next-generation antioxidants may help reverse spots the way Rx treatments do, with less irritation. Getting the most attention: CoffeeBerry, a fruit that absorbs about 50 percent more free radicals than green tea. "It has the ability to repair similar to a retinoid," says David McDaniel, assistant professor of clinical dermatology and plastic surgery at Eastern Virginia Medical School in Virginia Beach, who conducted trials on the ingredient. Others that are proving powerful: blue ginger and bearberry. Apply twice daily; top with sunscreen in the morning to seal in the ingredients and prevent the sun from reversing your efforts.

3 ways to make your products work harder

Slough smartly. "Exfoliation is the key step in anti-aging. It allows fresh cells to absorb active ingredients in creams and serums," says Brigitte Nieloud, international trainer for Orlane skin care in Chicago. Apply exfoliant while looking in the mirror. "I can spot a shower exfoliator — she doesn't slough to the face's border," Nieloud says.

Double up. Rubbing anti-agers onto warm, damp skin can deliver their active ingredients deeper. But what if you're not fresh from the shower? Spritz on a hydrating toner first. "Skin absorbs topicals like a sponge — and a soft, wet sponge is much better at cleaning up a spill than a stiff, dry one," says Annet King, director of training and development for the International Dermal Institute in Los Angeles.

Apply yourself. The thin skin around the eyes and lips is usually the first place you'll see lines. Apply exfoliants and anti-agers to these areas with your ring finger; it has the lightest touch, King says. And don't forget the neck and chest. "Skin doesn't stop at your chin," Nieloud says.

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