

SAVE MY
SKIN!

HOW TO GET RID OF WRINKLES
QUICKLY, EASILY
AND NATURALLY

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INTRODUCTION: **JUST WHAT IS SKIN, ANYWAY?**

It may seem like a strange question to ask, what is skin? Everyone alive has it; not only that, it's everywhere you look. No matter how bundled up you are against the weather, you still expose some skin, as will the person next to you.

Skin is something we typically don't think that much about, but it really is a fascinating topic and a very interesting part of the human anatomy. To talk about how to fix a skin problem such as wrinkles, we do well to talk about just what is skin to better understand why it gets wrinkles, acne, blackheads, freckles, moles, and so on.

AN ORGAN

Quick, can you name the body's largest organ? It's actually the skin. That's right, the skin is an organ just like your liver or your brain. It's the only organ that can exist outside the body and that is nourished from the inside out, so to speak.

Expose any other organ to daylight and you need to be sure that you're doing so only under very strict surgical procedures. If your liver or your brain gets exposed to the outside elements, it can die very quickly even if your heart is still feeding it blood and it's receiving adequate oxygen as well. Our other organs are not meant to live outside the body, whereas our skin is not meant to be submerged in blood inside the body the way all the other organs are.

The definition of an organ in terms of biology is an element that has two types of tissues working together to perform a specific function. Your liver is an organ because it is designed to assist with the body's metabolic function. The kidneys act as a filter. Organs are different from muscles because muscles exist for the sake of movement and do not perform a function on their own. You use your arm muscles only when your body makes them contract, either because you consciously reach for something or because the body reacts on its own.

COMPOSITION OF THE SKIN

There are actually three layers of the skin; the epidermis, the dermis, and the subcutaneous layer. These layers are each made up of a bundle of tissues and nerves.

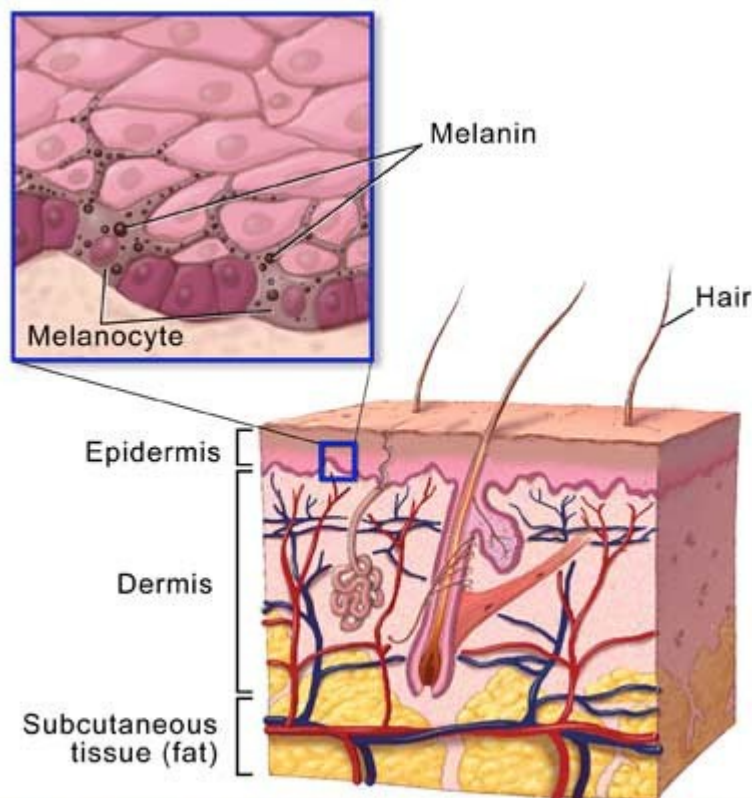
The bottommost layer of the skin, the subcutaneous, consists mainly of what is called adipose tissue but which in more casual circles can be referred to as fat. This isn't just for those who are obviously overweight, but is something that's under everyone's skin. This layer of adipose is insulation and protects the body from cold temperatures, keeping body heat in while keeping cold air out.

The middle layer or dermis is a bundle of connective tissue which supports the uppermost layer and which is full of nourishing blood vessels. The nerve tissue in this layer is also what provides feeling in the skin. This is why you can get a minor cut and still not damage the feeling or sensation of your skin.

The epidermis or outermost layer of the skin is another bundle of tissues and cells. This layer acts as a barrier between the body and the rest of

the world. This particular layer of skin is very fascinating; it is waterproof while having holes we call pores. Sweat is allowed to escape but water is not allowed to enter; if it did, we would literally drown the first time we took a shower or bath!

Skin is a very interesting part of our human body. It is sensitive to even the lightest tickle of a feather, but can stomp across a room without hesitation. The



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The layers of the skin.

nerve ending in our skin cells tell our brain how tightly or how loosely we need to grip anything, from a glass of milk to a surgeon's scalpel. Without those nerve endings we might squeeze that glass so hard it shatters, or drop everything we try to grasp because we're not holding it tight enough. Sweat glands in the skin's layers keep us cool when it's hot outside and that layer of fat that many wish they could reduce helps keep us warm in the winter. Indeed, skin is a very important and downright interesting part of the human body!

SKIN PIGMENT

Unfortunately today people probably give skin color much more attention than it needs. The tendency to judge people based on the color of their skin, whether for the good or the bad, is still prevalent in some areas and some cultures. But what really is skin color? What causes people to have different skin color, whether it's enough to refer to someone as being from a different race or the many shades and tones of skin we notice even within the same race and the same family? Why is skin like this, and is it important at all in the skin's function?

Skin pigment or melanin is what causes persons to have different tones and shades of skin color. The word "pigment" refers simply to color and is used to describe not just skin color but anything that has color and tones. Artists will mix different shades of a paint to get just the right pigment. Various degrees of pigment is what gives one color its different shades; think of the color red, where there is what we call fire engine red, berry red, crimson red, and so on. The amount of pigment in each shade is what gives it a unique look.

Melanin comes in two types: pheomelanin (red) and eumelanin (dark brown to nearly black). The amount you have of each type is determined by your genes, from your father and your mother equally.

Understanding that we all have red and brown pigment in our skin and that our actual skin color is just going to be a mix of these colors in varying degrees, we get a better understanding of how different skin colors are present. Someone with very pale skin has a small amount of eumelanin, or the dark brown pigment; someone that is very ruddy in skin tone will have a higher concentration of the pheomelanin or red pigment, and of course all the different shades and tones in between.

How concentrated our skin pigment is also has a lot to do with our skin's shade. Think of pennies scattered on a light-colored table. If they are far apart you can see much of that white through them. Push them closer together, and you can see less of that white color. Push them so close together that they're touching and you see virtually none of that table. So it is with pigment; having a higher

concentration of these colors means that they're pushed further together and the skin is darker. A person of Native American descent will have a higher concentration of the pheomelanin and have this pigment closer together, giving him or her a more red tone to the skin, whereas a person of Irish descent may have a red tone to the skin but the pigment is further apart so he or she will typically look a bit more pale.

Obviously this is just a very basic explanation of skin's color and tone, but it gives you a good idea of how people that are even closely related can have different skin tones, and why there is such a difference in skin color in people all around the world. Just like there is a wide variety of hair color and eye color, so there is a wide variety of skin color and shades as well.

FINGERPRINTS AND SUCH

Our skin does much more than just keep our innards on the inside. On our hands and feet our skin enables us to grip so that we can touch and pick up things and to walk. We are able to do this because of ridges in the skin called fingerprints and footprints.

Think of your skin as like smooth glass; without these ridges of course you couldn't pick up anything and would probably slide across the floor like ice skating.

Your fingerprints are unique to you, as you probably already know. They are a combination of whorls and ridges, and this combination is what makes them unique.



You may not have given your fingerprints and footprints that much thought, as few people do (unless of course they're planning a big bank heist and need to keep their identity a secret!). But imagine everything they do all day that involves

touch. Without your fingerprints you couldn't hold your toothbrush or hairbrush or your coffee cup. Driving your car would be nearly impossible, as would virtually anything else.

Like so many other things, you may not give these things much thought, but your skin is very complicated and very important part of your everyday activities.

SKIN CARE

Like so many other parts of our body, the skin does have built-in mechanisms to keep it healthy but still may need some care on our part.

The pores that we have on our skin allow both sweat and oil to escape to the surface. While we think of sweat as being simply a natural coolant, it also acts as a lubricating agent as well. This moisture keeps the skin soft and supple. Oil does the same thing. While some may hate to see that shine on their face from overly oily skin, this oil actually keeps the skin smooth and helps it to function.

Sometimes we do need to help this care of our skin along. Consider all the elements that your skin comes into contact with every single day, especially your hands and face. No matter what other clothing you put on, your face is still going to be exposed to wind, pollution, dirt, and all these other damaging elements. Your hands come into contact with so many things every single day, all of which rub against your skin and irritate it.



Pollutants do a great deal of damage to the skin.

It's no wonder then that the hands and face especially may need some additional help when it comes to keeping them clean and well-cared for. Your hands come into contact with not just pollutants and surfaces that will irritate them, but with germs as well. Hand washing, which is of course important for your overall health, means that you're also washing away those natural oils and moisturizers.

Improper cleaning of your face also means that all those pollutants and dirt just stay on your face and settle in your pores.

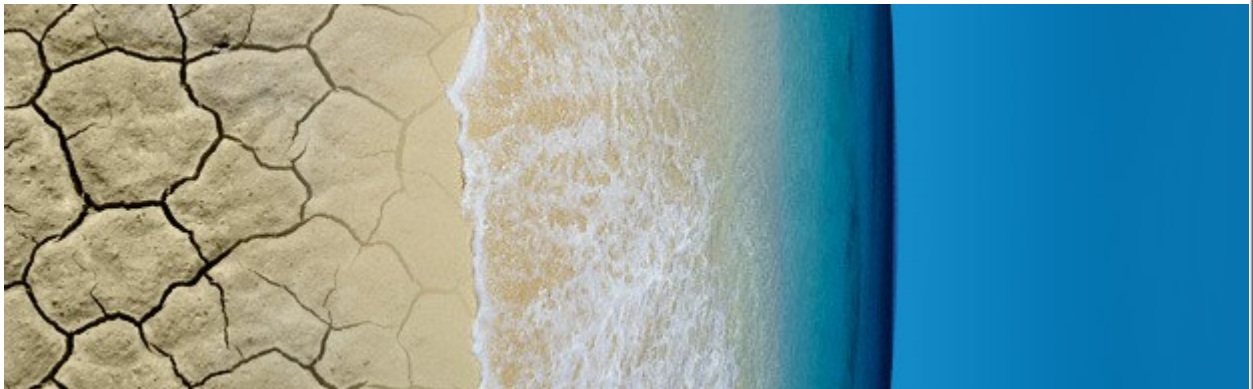
When you don't take care of your skin the way you should, it shows. Clogged pores on your face can mean acne and blackheads, which are collections of dirt and oil that show up as these blemishes. Practices such as improper shaving or waxing can mean ingrown hairs, where the hair shaft begins to grow back into the skin. This can be painful and unsightly.

The proper use of healthy cosmetics and other facial products is very important, for men and women. Some years ago before dermatologists really understood how these products affected the skin on the face, cosmetics were made of harsh ingredients with an oil base. This might sound like a good thing, having moisturizing oil on the face, but these oils are not natural and didn't absorb or evaporate well. They just sat on the face and held in the dirt, causing acne and other blemishes.

Cleaning the face with harsh products also harms the face the way those strong cleansers hurt the hands. These strip the face of their natural oils and can cause dry skin and other irritations.

DRY SKIN

Overly dry skin, no matter where it occurs, can be very uncomfortable. Rarely does it mean anything serious but can be so irritating that the sufferer still wants a fix for it.



Dry skin can be genetic; the amount of oil that one produces for the skin can be just inherent. But usually dry skin is the result of environmental factors and poor skin care. Those harsh cleansers and soaps dry up your natural oils. Coming into contact with other harsh products all day can make the skin on your hands very dry; most who have their hands unprotected in cleaning solutions or such substances often report severely dry skin.

Wind and cold also cause dry skin as these dry up skin's moisture. Think of using a hair dryer - this evaporates the moisture in your hair, and wind is the same on your skin. Cold also makes it more difficult for your skin to produce those natural oils and other elements that keep skin hydrated.

The good news is that you can usually fix dry skin by keeping your skin protected with gloves when working or when it's cold, and by using lotions and other moisturizers.

So now that you know more about the skin than you probably ever wanted to know, the question is, how do you take care of it in order to decrease or prevent wrinkles and other blemishes?

Sometimes there are wrinkles or other problems with the skin that can only be addressed by a doctor, but sometimes there is much that one can do to fix the situation on your own.

In this book, we're going to cover some basic information about your skin and skincare routines and regimens that will help to reduce and eliminate wrinkles, and prevent them from ever coming back as well.

We'll discuss:

- Some basic skin problems that most people face and why they happen, and what you can do to correct or prevent them. We'll include basic information about blemishes including acne and blackheads, things such as rashes and dermatitis, and how taking care of our skin to prevent these blemishes is also part of what will help prevent wrinkles.
- What causes wrinkles specifically on the skin's surface, including the major culprits, and things we can do to avoid getting them in the first place. By discussing how they occur, we can be better informed and prepared to prevent them entirely.
- General skincare tips and techniques, many of which people often forego or are not aware of. We'll talk about why these tips and techniques are important for good skin overall, and how many of these basic tips and techniques will help eliminate or avoid wrinkles.
- Solutions for wrinkles in general, from topical solutions that you may be prescribed by a doctor or ones that you purchase over the counter at your local pharmacy. We'll discuss in depth these different solutions and

examine which ones work, which ones don't, and the risks and options for each one.

- In-depth information about Botox, the popular treatment method among many celebrities and the rich and famous. We'll talk about what Botox is, how it work, some words of warning, and other things to think about if you're considering this option for wrinkle reduction.
- Some natural treatment methods for addressing wrinkles specifically and things you can do that are much less invasive and harsh than the Botox and other procedures.

So while some of the things we'll discuss in this book won't deal specifically with wrinkles themselves, by getting a better understanding of skin's composition and its care, you can have a better understanding of how to prevent wrinkles in the first place and how to address them once they do happen.

If you're ready for smoother skin, then let's begin!

WHY WE GET SKIN PROBLEMS

Have you ever been jealous of someone with very beautiful skin? Whether it's that Hollywood starlet or someone you work with, when you see very beautiful skin you often can't help but to look at it. There's something very appealing about smooth, blemish-free skin.

Unfortunately, perfect skin is usually rare and very hard to come by. From acne and blackheads to scars, stretch marks, rashes, rosacea, and so many other problems, skin is not always perfect. Some of these problems are just inherent and genetic, while others are things that we've brought on ourselves.

FACE PROBLEMS

Blemishes and other problems on the face are really no laughing matter. When in school it's not unusual to hear kids teasing one another about having pimples or other problems, but for those who suffer from these things, it can be very serious.

Imagine for a moment that you have severe scars all over your face, maybe from an accident. No matter which way you turned, your scars were very visible to everyone around you. You know that when people look at you, all they see are those deep inroads in your face. How would you feel? How comfortable would you be around people knowing this is what they see when they look at you? You would be nervous about making conversation and would probably very rarely smile.

People with severe blemishes on their face can feel just as bad as that person with severe scarring. They become extremely self-conscious and feel that those blemishes are the only things that people see when they look at them. So if you know someone with severe acne or other such blemishes, try to understand how they must feel. And if you're the person with these problems, then understand that you're not alone, and that other people may very well sympathize with you.

While there isn't much you can do for some very severe types of facial blemishes, there are others that you can address yourself. Let's discuss just a few of these here to see how they happen and what you can do. By covering this information, we have a better understanding of how wrinkles on the face form and what you can do about that particular problem as well.

acne and blackheads

Acne happens when oil and dead skin cells get trapped in skin's pores. This causes an inflammation or eruption that we call acne.

Keeping your face clean is of course part of the remedy for acne, but there needs to be care and caution exercised in this regard. Using products that are too harsh strips your skin of its natural oils, which sometimes just makes your skin overreact and produce even more oil. Some with acne also don't think that they need to moisturize their face, reasoning that since oil is part of the problem then more oil will make it even worse. But cleansing your face is like washing your hands; you're going to pull the good stuff off with the bad, so you need to replace it.



Common reasons for this dirt and oil to get clogged into the pores also include sweating and products that clog pores. Many brands of makeup and other skin care products are full of harsh chemical and other ingredients that don't set well on the skin. While makeup manufacturers are getting better and better at using dermatologists to help them with the chemical composition of makeup, they still need to use some things as preservatives, tints, and so on, many of which are very bad for the skin.

Those that exercise regularly also will find that they may have clogged pores, especially around the forehead where they sweat more. It's important to keep your face clean if you exercise; of course, you don't want to stop exercising just because of a pimple or two as exercise is one of the healthiest things you can do for your body and your skin overall. We'll cover that subject more in a later section.

cysts

Cysts are something like pimples but can be the result of things other than dirt and oils. They can contain air, fluids, or other materials as well. People can get cysts all over their body, even on the inside. They are usually harmless and typically nothing more than an annoyance on the face.

There may not be much that you do to either cause or cure your cysts. Ones that are very large need medical treatment by a doctor.

RASHES

Many rashes that people get on their skin are minor and only slightly irritating. Virtually everyone has gotten a skin rash at one time or another.

A rash is usually very dry skin or an irritation on the skin that actually causes it to be broken. Overly dry skin can develop a rash, or they can be caused by exposure to chemicals or other irritants. Being in the cold air for long periods of time can also dry the skin to the point where a rash develops.

You're probably already well aware of how babies often get diaper rash; this is usually because of their skin being in close contact with a wet diaper for a prolonged period of time.



Rashes can also be symptoms of other conditions such as allergies or even asthma.

DERMATITIS

Dermatitis is a term that describes an inflammation of the skin. It's not contagious in any way and isn't life-threatening, but can be an annoyance to the sufferer to the point where he or she would seek medical treatment. Types of dermatitis include:

- Contact dermatitis, a rash that results from either repeated contact with irritants or contact with allergy-producing substances, such as poison ivy

- Neurodermatitis, a chronic itchy skin condition localized to certain areas of the skin
- Seborrheic dermatitis, a common scalp condition that often causes dandruff
- Stasis dermatitis, a skin condition that's caused by a buildup of fluid under the skin of the legs
- Atopic dermatitis, more commonly known as eczema or atopic eczema, a chronic itchy rash that tends to come and go
- Perioral dermatitis, a bumpy rash around the mouth

Redness, swelling, and itching of the skin are common symptoms of dermatitis.

Very severe cases of dermatitis typically require a doctor's intervention and prescription creams or topical ointments. Sometimes this condition goes away on its own but typically flares up again on a regular basis. Most over the counter creams and ointments that you purchase at the pharmacy are not strong enough to treat severe dermatitis.

ECZEMA

Eczema is a very common form of severely dry skin that affects more people than they may realize. It's not unusual for someone to get small patches of eczema during the winter or when their skin has undergone a particular type of stress.

The symptoms of eczema include roughness, scaling, and flaking of the skin, or an eruption of redness in a particular area. Patients report severe itching or burning in the area of the eruption.

It is thought that eczema is hereditary and is often associated with asthma or allergies.

Severe cases of eczema typically require medical intervention and prescription medication to treat. It is not contagious but is very uncomfortable. Over the counter creams and ointments that one purchases from the pharmacy are usually not strong enough to treat severe eczema and many can even irritate the inflamed area because of their ingredients.

Sufferers of eczema do well to avoid scratching the area no matter how tempted they may be. This only irritates the eruption and causes more damage. Keep the area out of the elements as wind and cold will also make the problem worse.

MELANOMA

Melanoma refers to a cancer of the skin. Most cases of melanoma look like a mole but can also be oddly shaped.

Cases of melanoma have increased over the past few years; scientists attribute this to the depletion of the ozone layer so that we have less protection from the sun's ultraviolet rays, and from persons who tan whether outside or in a tanning salon.

Any case of melanoma needs a doctor's intervention as this cancer can spread throughout the system, but if caught early enough is usually very treatable. Most cases of melanoma can be cut away from the body in a very simple procedure.

Anyone with any odd shaped marks on their body that looks like a mole, or anyone that has a mole that is changing color or shape, should have this area checked out by their doctor immediately.

The rise in cases of melanoma is also why it's important to wear sunscreen and to protect your skin when outside. This is especially true of those who are very fair skinned and so may burn more easily than others; having fair skin and being more prone to sunburn is a symptom of your skin being more sensitive to the sun's rays. Even if you're going to be outside only for a few hours it's important to wear sunscreen on your face, neck, shoulders, and other exposed parts of the body.

INFLAMMATION

Any type of swelling or inflammation of the skin is caused by cellular infiltration or a rush of blood to the skin cells at that time. Usually inflammation is due to an injury, illness, or allergy to a certain element.

When blood rushes to a certain area of the skin you will notice that it swells and is difficult to move as it was before. For example, those with arthritis or a swelling of the joints have a hard time grasping things or bending their knees. This swelling of the skin cells takes away the skin's elasticity and makes it more rigid

and difficult to move as it should be. It often even feels more rigid and unnatural to the sufferer.

An inflammation is something that typically goes away after a certain time but sometimes is a symptom of something more serious happening under the skin. If you have any unexplained inflammation of the skin that does not go away after a day or two, you would do well to seek medical attention.

WHAT CAUSES SKIN DAMAGE AND WRINKLES SPECIFICALLY?

Our skin is an amazing organ that is designed for many purposes. It keeps our innards in and the nasty stuff out. It keeps us cool when we need to and warm when we're not. But our skin is more than just some plastic baggie that holds everything together. Understanding its design and structure a bit better will help us to understand just what causes wrinkles in the first place.

SKIN'S COMPOSITION

Much of what causes wrinkles has to do with the proper hydration of the skin and of the way it is made.

As we age, the middle layer or dermis of the skin begins to reproduce less rapidly, making the cells in this layer further apart. The dermis also contains collagen fibers which are like proteins that support the outer layer of skin. This collagen begins to lose its firmness so that the outer layer will hold depressions and creases more easily.

Think of two pillows, one made of feathers and one of firm foam. If you push down on the one made of foam, it won't hold that shape of your hand as easily as when you push down on the one made of feathers. The collagen in your skin is like that foam. As it weakens, it becomes less firm and more like those feathers. Every time you smile or crease your forehead, the skin is less and less able to bounce back from those depressions.

And as the collagen begins to break down, your face will just naturally lose much of its shape and wrinkles will develop. Usually a person will develop wrinkles about the same time they develop loose jowls or sagging skin around their neck and chin line. This is because the collagen is breaking down so that the skin is not as firm as it once was.

Age also means that the body is less able to produce those natural oils it once did. When your skin is dry it's more likely to be wrinkled as it pulls in on itself. For this example, let's use the illustration of a cake. One that is very dry is crumbly but one that is moist is more likely to hold its shape and be firm. When your skin is very dry it is like that crumbly cake; those small depressions and indentations on the skin are going to do more damage when the skin is dry. When it's hydrated and moist, it's like that moist cake. It is springier and more able to hold its shape.

Age is not the only culprit when it comes to the cause of wrinkles.

BLAME THE SUN

Some time ago there were dermatologists that decided to do some comparing on person's skin to see just what caused all the damage to the skin in the first place. They deduced that it must be the sun because of the comparison of the skin on one's face versus the skin on one's buttocks - while the rear end rarely showed signs of damage or aging, the face obviously did.



The sun is one of the worst culprits when it comes to damage of the skin.

There are of course other reasons as to why one's face might be more wrinkled than one's behind, and some people may even have some wrinkles back there as well! But let's consider the sun's damage to the skin for a moment.

The sun as we know is just a big ball of heat. Think of applying heat to anything - it dries up. As a matter of fact, that's how we dry things! We add heat, which absorbs moisture. Heat from the sun of course absorbs the moisture from our face.

However, direct sunlight also does damage to our skin. You may have heard about ultraviolet light and radiation, and much of this is in sunlight. The earth's atmosphere filters out quite a lot of it, but those wavelengths still come through.

Ultraviolet light is very important for plant life and vegetation, so it's not as if it's an evil thing just by itself. We as humans also need it for our own particular health as well. Someone that is housebound often looks pale and sickly; typically because they need more light, just like a plant.

But think of persons that practice tanning or that are out in the sun consistently. They are purposely exposing themselves to inordinate amounts of ultraviolet light and causing premature wrinkles.

DRY SKIN

When the skin is dry, it's going to wrinkle more easily. Creases in the skin are going to stay creased.

Many think that a way to avoid wrinkles is to keep from smiling, frowning, wrinkling their forehead, or doing anything else that makes their skin crease. It's true that wrinkles typically happen in the area of the face where there is more movement - around the eyes, mouth, and forehead. But thinking that you're going to have a stone face to avoid wrinkles is of course not realistic.

Usually these wrinkles happen around your face where there is less oil and moisture. Keeping your skin hydrated is going to work much better.

There's probably no one alive that wants to hear about how he or she is at fault or to blame for making their skin less than radiant. But in reality there are many things that people do to actually bring on blemishes and even premature wrinkles.

Knowing what these things are should feel empowering. If there was nothing that you were actually doing to cause wrinkles and blemishes then there would be nothing you could do to fix the problem, but when you hear about problems that you're creating for yourself then you may understand how you can fix or correct those problems.

Some of the things we're going to outline in this section might be a bit sensitive, but remember that this is all just medical science we're talking about here. No one is making moral judgments about your lifestyle and your choices, but then again, we can't deny how some of these choices affect our health and the appearance of our skin.

SMOKING

Smoking is probably the worst thing that people do to themselves overall, but especially to their skin as far as premature dryness and wrinkles are concerned. Just why is it that smoking affects our skin in this way?

The poisons in tobacco and especially the nicotine are quickly absorbed in the bloodstream and are then carried to every cell in our body through the blood. These poisons are like little hijackers that latch on to those blood cells and hitch a ride to anywhere and everywhere. We easily associate lung cancer with smoking, but because this nicotine and these other poisons are transported to every part of the body, smoking is associated with cancer of the liver, bladder, anus, digestive system, reproductive systems, and virtually every other type of cancer there is. Obviously there is just no part of the body that's safe from its harmful effects.



Have you ever thought of the damage that smoking does to your skin?

While this nicotine and these other poisons are harmful to your skin, there are other reasons as to why smoking is so damaging to your skin. When you inhale

cigarette smoke, the tar settles into your lungs and essentially chokes them. And yes, we're talking about the same type of tar that you see being applied to roads and roofs. It's obviously not the same amount but this thick gooey material does build up in the lungs. When your lungs can't do their job properly, you're not getting that needed oxygen to your tissues and cells. As your lungs choke, so do all the other cells in your body.

It's not unusual for a smoker to have very dry skin, and usually very prematurely.

There is another reason that cigarette smoking causes wrinkles on the face, and this has to do with the fact that smokers are typically just sitting in a cloud of their own smoke. Cigarette smoke, when exhaled, is worse than virtually any other pollutant there is. When a smoker exhales that smoke, it lingers around the face area. This means more dry skin around the mouth, eyes, chin, and other areas of the exposed face.

Some smokers think that getting filters for their ashtrays or smoking filtered cigarettes will help in this regard, but this is very shortsighted and something of a fallacy. If you smoke, you're going to have very dry skin and premature wrinkles. That's really all there is to it. If you're concerned about your health overall and especially about the health of your skin, the only surefire thing you can do is to quit smoking entirely.

TANNING

If the sun's ultraviolet radiation is bad for the skin, imagine what tanning does to it!

Using tanning booths and beds are some of the worst things one can do for healthy skin, as is being out in the sun for prolonged periods of time.

This is something to remember too when you're out on the water or in a pool. The water acts as a mirror for the sunlight and reflects it back onto you, making it all the more damaging. Being on a boat all day is even worse than simply lounging in your backyard all day.

EXPOSURE

When we talk about exposing your skin, we're not talking about anything vulgar here! Exposure doesn't just mean streaking across a football field to make a point to your college's rivals.

Exposing your skin to the elements is another reason that we often get wrinkles, along with many other skin problems. Excessive sunlight, exposure to the cold and other such harsh elements take a great toll on the skin.

Think of how you feel if you walk around in the cold without a scarf or gloves. Your neck and hands even begin to hurt from the exposure. Your lips get chapped as well.



While this effect is very obvious when the weather is extreme, it can also harm your skin even in very small amounts. Being out when the weather is just moderately cold without covering can dry your skin and lead to wrinkles.

People these days rarely think about covering themselves when they're outside. Wearing hats and gloves can be seen as "uncool." However, keeping yourself covered and out of the elements is important for the health of your skin.

TAKING CARE OF YOUR SKIN IN GENERAL

Everyone's skin is as different as their hair color. There may be some elements in common, but typically it's very unique just to you.

Taking care of your skin might involve some particular steps that you yourself need to be aware of and what works for one person isn't going to work for you. Someone with very oily skin should have a different skin care regimen than someone with very dry skin. However, skin is still an organ of the human body and like all the other parts of the body, there are some things that we all have in common when it comes to its care.

When it comes to wrinkles in particular, sometimes an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, as they say. Anything and everything that you can do to keep your skin healthy before you begin to see the first sign of wrinkles is going to help tremendously. Also, taking good care of your skin in general is going to help your wrinkles fade or at least be less noticeable. We'll discuss wrinkles themselves specifically in a later section, but for now we're going to cover some very basic but important aspects of general skin care.

Skin, like so many other parts of our body, survives with blood and oxygen. Let's discuss those two elements now.

OXYGEN CIRCULATION

Most people think that oxygen in the body is provided by the lungs. In reality, the lungs filter the oxygen that we breathe in through our air passages. However, once that oxygen is filtered it is actually the blood that carries it to the cells in the body, including the skin cells.

Oxygen is important because it is a necessary chemical that all our body's cells use for nourishment. The fresher the oxygen in our body the healthier we will be.

This is why it's important to breathe deeply and to breathe fresh, clean air. Persons living in highly polluted environments or that smoke are not just poisoning their skin from the outside but are also delivering very poor-quality oxygen to the skin cells from the inside. The lungs can filter out only so much.

Using air purifiers is a good way to improve the oxygen in your system. Of course you don't want to go overboard and think that you can never breathe in a room that doesn't have an air purifier, but if you live in a very polluted area you might want to consider using one in your home or at least in your bedroom. This gives your lungs a way to cleanse themselves from all the impurities they're breathing in during the day.

Another way to improve the oxygen in your system is to exercise regularly. This helps to strengthen your lungs and makes them better able to filter out those impurities.

People that exercise regularly seem to notice that their breathing becomes deeper and less labored. Think of someone that needs to catch their breath when they walk up the stairs; usually someone that is in good shape because of regular physical exercise doesn't have this problem. If your lungs are working well, your skin is going to naturally look better.



Do you know all the ways that exercise benefits your skin?

BLOOD CIRCULATION

As mentioned blood is one of the most important parts of your body's health and your skin's appearance as well. Blood brings all the nutrients that your body needs to each and every cell, including those of your skin.

Fresh blood means more nutrition for those cells, and the better your blood circulation the better your body will be nourished. Your skin will look better if your circulation is better.

Improving blood circulation usually involves improving your physical activity level. The more you exercise the more your heart beats, pushing fresh blood to every cell of your body. Your heart also becomes stronger itself, meaning that your circulation will be improved even when you're at rest.

You don't need to overexert yourself when you exercise in order for your blood circulation to improve. You simply need to do this enough to increase your heart rate for a prolonged period of time, and do this on a regular basis.

If you're very overweight right now or very sedentary and not used to exercising, just start walking more often. Walk for 30 minutes after dinner, and get into the habit of parking your car further from whatever building you're going into.

It may sound a bit disgusting to think that your skin needs blood in order for it to be healthy, but as we said previously, your skin is nourished from the inside out, not just the outside in. Improving your blood circulation is therefore a very important part of skin care.

WATER

The human body is made up of mostly water; some estimates put it at some 90% or even more. Our blood is mostly water, and water is contained in all our muscles and organs as well.

The skin is no exception. It is made of quite a bit of water and a lack of it in our system can cause dry skin and therefore premature wrinkles. While we often think about things we can use to add moisture to our skin including creams and lotions, we sometimes forget that water is just as important if not even more so.

We get quite a bit of water from the foods we eat but often need to supplement this with just plain water or other beverages.

When the body ingests water, it will send it to vital areas such as the heart and the muscles; the skin is the last area of the body that will get any leftover water in the system. This is why we need to add extra hydration so that our skin is properly taken care of. Very dry skin is often a sign of dehydration.

Keep in mind that caffeine is a diuretic meaning that it actually causes the body to lose water, so drinking beverages that contain caffeine are actually going to make things worse. People who really don't enjoy water itself might do better with sports drinks, unsweetened fruit juices, and the like.



AVOIDING THE SUN

Since the sun does so much damage to the skin, we do well to be mindful of it everyday and especially if we're going outside or will be out for any length of time. Wear a hat or visor when you play golf or baseball, or are going to be doing some gardening or otherwise be outside.

Why is water so important when it comes to taking care of your skin?

Use sunscreen everyday; many skin care products now contain a good sunscreen. You can get in the habit of putting on a nice moisturizer with a sunscreen even if you don't plan on wearing makeup.

This goes for the men as well. There are many skincare products that are available for the men and don't smell like flowers or cosmetics. Using a bit of moisturizer after you shave can actually do wonders for your skin's feel all day, and can keep you protected from the sun as well.

If you're someone who enjoys tanning, this is the time to stop. You may think it gives your skin a nice healthy glow but in reality you're doing untold damage to it by purposely exposing it to the sun all the time. Learn to appreciate your skin's

natural tone, and wear sunscreen at the beach and when by the pool. Stop going to the tanning salon, even in the winter.

Tanning is one of the worst things you can do, along with smoking, when it comes to premature aging of the skin.

AVOIDING THE ELEMENTS

There is such a thing as wind burn, when your skin actually gets burned from being out in cold wind. While it is usually extreme cases of wind and cold that cause this, more mild weather conditions in the winter can also do a great deal of damage to your skin.

It's imperative to keep yourself covered when in the winter weather, and especially when participating in sports that will only add to the exposure and wind on your face and neck. It's not unusual for those who are outside during the winter months to have small rashes and patches of dry skin on their cheeks, necks, and other such exposed areas.

Anyone outside consistently during the winter months is going to have premature wrinkles if they don't properly cover themselves and make up for this exposure with extra moisturizers.

CLEANSERS

Keeping your skin clean is important to its health, especially on your face. But unfortunately we often fall prey to the thinking that if some is good, then more must be better. It's not unusual for people to overdo it with the cleansing, being harsh and abrasive with the products they use or the methods they try.

Soap is one of the worst things to use for your face. While you need regular soap for your hands in order to kill the germs, your face doesn't have these same germs and doesn't need this same level of cleansing. Soap is very harsh and strips



your skin of its natural oils and moisturizers.

It's always a good idea to use facial cleansers that are designed specifically for the face. Whether they're foaming cleansers, gels, or just liquid, they are usually designed to be less harsh than regular bath soaps and cleansers.

toners and astringents

The purpose of toners is to neutralize oils and make all parts of your face the same pH or composition. This means that it will reduce the oil around your nose and forehead but add some moisture to your cheeks as well. Toners can also typically be used as cleansers for just light cleaning of the skin on the face.

Astringents on the other hand are also very harsh and typically shouldn't be used by anyone but those with severely oily skin. They are known to strip the skin and leave it exposed to the elements.

Sometimes teenagers use astringents because they are more prone to oily skin and acne, but these can do quite a bit of damage to their skin. While they may remove so much of that oil, they also remove the good natural oils from the skin as well.

MOISTURIZERS

A common mistake that many people make is thinking that only those with dry skin need moisturizers.

In reality, even if you have very oily skin it's a good idea to moisturize your face. Cleansing and washing take away much of the skins' needed oils. There are also areas of the face that don't have oil glands and so aren't getting any needed oil at all. This includes the area around your eyes and your cheeks. While these areas of the skin do get moisture from the water in your skin cells, adding some extra moisture on top of the skin is going to help tremendously with the prevention of wrinkles.

It's also true that sometimes when the body senses that we have dry skin on the face it will have the oil glands work a bit harder, thinking that it will make up for this condition by sending additional oil to the surface. When you use a good moisturizer you may actually be cutting off the body's signal to add this additional and harmful extra oil.

Moisturizers also protect your skin from the harmful elements in the atmosphere. They provide a protective coating or barrier to wind, sun, and pollution. Most also have a sunscreen built in, so there is even additional protection in this way.

CHOICE OF PRODUCTS

The products that we put on our face can do a lot to either protect us from wrinkles and other blemishes or actually make us have those things.

For example, we've covered how dry skin is going to be more prone to wrinkles. Alcohol of course is a drying agent. If you were to use products that contain a large amount of alcohol, which is usually the main ingredient in many astringents and cleansers, you're going to be overly drying your skin. Check your skincare products and see if there is alcohol in your cleansers. If so, toss them. Find something else.

Makeup is another problem area for many women. Many centuries ago, makeup used by Egyptians and Romans actually contained mercury; some were also made from animal fat, tar, and had high levels of lead.

While most makeup manufacturers have come a long way toward making their products much better for your skin and some even have good moisturizers and sunscreens built right in, some are still very damaging to the skin because of the ingredients in them. These include preservatives and other chemicals that are necessary for the makeup to hold its color and liquidity and to remain fresh on the shelves for months, but these ingredients can be harsh on your skin and face.

These ingredients that are not good for you skin include:

- Petroleum/Petrolatum/Mineral Oil/Liquid Paraffin. These are considered cancer causing by some researchers and have been banned or restricted for use in cosmetics and makeup brands in some countries. These ingredients are often used as moisturizers in some makeup brands. They can clog your pores and cause breakouts.
- Propylene Glycol. This is a natural ingredient composed of vegetable oil and alcohol. However, it often causes skin irritations, allergic reactions and toxic reactions as well. Propylene glycol is rarely used in cosmetics but should be avoided.
- Fragrance. There can be some 200 ingredients in fragrances used in cosmetics, and usually they are used only to mask the odor of other

chemicals or to give the makeup a "cosmetic" odor. Most fragrances however cause symptoms such as headaches, rashes, dizziness, skin irritation, and unevenness of color.

- Coal Tar/Dyes/FD&C Colors. Obviously there needs to be some coloring in many cosmetics; what's the point of wearing makeup if there's no color? However, many dyes found in cosmetics are somewhat harmful to your skin and scalp. Be careful of those who have these ingredients listed at the top of their ingredient list; this means that there is an over-concentration of coloring and can be harmful to you.
- Parabens. A paraben is actually a highly toxic chemical. It causes allergic reactions, skin rashes, and breakouts. Cosmetics that use parabens have only a small amount in them, or otherwise the product could not make it to store shelves, but be wary of those with this ingredient. If possible, avoid this ingredient as well.
- Imidazolidinyl Urea/Diazolidinyl Urea. These are a primary cause of contact dermatitis. They may degrade to formaldehyde and are very toxic. Rarely do cosmetics use these ingredients, but be wary of them and avoid those with any high concentration of these ingredients.
- Formaldehyde. This is a cancer causing agent. It also causes a variety of ailments including skin irritations, respiratory problems, and immune system toxicities. It's rare that you would find this ingredient in cosmetics today but it does happen, so be careful.
- Talc. This is an ingredient that clogs pores and causes skin irritation. It has been linked to cancer and respiratory problems. Some foundations have talc as an ingredient in order to absorb oil, but this can typically just make your skin breakout with acne and other blemishes.

These ingredients are not just found in makeup and cosmetics but also in skincare products, even those used by men. It's important to review the list of ingredients in any product and choose those that are not going to make your skin worse.

Of course, a small amount of these chemicals is probably not going to be a problem, but some cosmetics contain more than they should. Opt for those that have fewer ingredients and that contain natural ingredients.

EXFOLIATES

The purpose of exfoliates is to remove the top surface of the skin, which includes things such as dry skin or dead skin cells.

This sounds much harsher than it really is. Most products that you purchase as an exfoliate remove just the very smallest layer of skin.

It's important that a person exfoliate on a regular basis, but you also need to be careful of overdoing it. Using an exfoliate too often or using a product that's too harsh means that you'll be over-drying your skin.

The reason this is important is because people often exfoliate when they have dry skin, but if the product is too harsh, they're going to be left with dry skin. And then they exfoliate again, and it creates a never ending circle of abusing your skin.

WRINKLES, SCARS, AND OTHER SERIOUS SKIN PROBLEMS

Many serious skin problems, including wrinkles and scars, have some elements in common. For one, they are sometimes permanent. Some wrinkles, scars, stretch marks, and other such damage to the skin are just going to be there permanently, and will require cosmetic surgery to cure.

If your wrinkles are bothering you, you have many options to help eliminate or at least reduce their appearance. Wrinkle treatments include:

TOPICAL REMEDIES

Topical retinoids are remedies derived from Vitamin A. They are often used to reduce smaller wrinkles such as around the eyes, uneven pigmentation or coloring on the face, and even roughness of the skin.

These retinoids can be labeled as Retin A or just retinol. They can also make your skin a bit more sensitive to elements such as sunlight and wind, so you often need to protect yourself with caps and scarves and such. You can also burn more easily as well. Some patients experience dryness or itching.

There are other non-prescription wrinkle creams that you can purchase over the counter at any pharmacy or retailer. Some are more effective than others, and much of this will depend upon your skin as well as the product and ingredients themselves.

alpha hydroxyl

Alpha hydroxyl is like a very fine acid that removes the top surface of the skin. This sounds much harsher than it actually is! Alpha hydroxyl is actually a very

mild exfoliate but you do need to be careful about overusing it as you would with any other exfoliate product.

antioxidants

Antioxidants are those good chemicals that destroy free radicals, which are bad chemicals that attack healthy cells in the body. Many skin care products today contain antioxidants, usually derived from green tea or aloe. If you use antioxidants on a regular basis you may notice that your skin is healthier looking overall and this can decrease wrinkles and prevent new ones from occurring.

coenzyme Q10, copper peptides, kinetin

These elements are typically meant to replenish the skin's moisture and plump up its collagen.

The degree to which these topical treatments work is usually very limited. Most contain such a small concentration of any of these ingredients that they cannot do much good, at least not enough to be visible to the naked eye.

OTHER TREATMENT OPTIONS

There are more involved treatment options for wrinkles that mean visits to a doctor or dermatologist. These include:

dermabrasion

Dermabrasion is a type of sanding of the surface layer of your skin. This sanding procedure removes the top layer of skin so that the layer underneath is exposed; this layer underneath is usually less wrinkled and healthier. This also means that healthy skin grows in its place.

There are many things to think about when it comes to dermabrasion. The first is that this is a very complex procedure that is typically difficult to recover from. The patient usually has quite a bit of redness, swelling, and pain after the procedure. They report being very aware of the procedure as their face continues to feel as if it's been sanded roughly.

The recovery time for this procedure is very long; most patients report still having redness and irritation for months afterward.

Dermabrasion is a procedure that is typically given only to those who have very serious skin problems, such as deep wrinkles or acne scars. It has fallen out of favor with many dermatologists and potential clients in the past few years because of the extent of the procedure and recovery time.

microdermabrasion

Much like dermabrasion, microdermabrasion works by removing a surface of skin. A vacuum suction is held over your face while aluminum oxide crystals sandblast your skin. This enables only a very fine layer of skin to be removed. The procedure is much more direct and less harsh than regular dermabrasion.

Patients still report redness and swelling in the area that is treated, but recovery time is much quicker.

laser, light, radio

Much like the dermabrasion techniques, there are lasers available that destroy the outer layers of your skin and at the same time, heat the underlying skin which stimulates collagen renewal. New skin then forms that's smoother and firmer.

Some patients report that there is a long recovery time for laser treatments, up to three months or so. Some doctors prefer to use pulsed light or radio frequency, both of which do essentially the same job as lasers but not as intensely.

Light and radio do not harm the epidermis in the same way as laser treatments may, but also do not stimulate as much new cell growth as well. These treatments usually need to be repeated more frequently than laser or dermabrasion.

chemical peel

A chemical peel is exactly what it sounds like. A doctor applies a very mild form of acid to the face which actually burns off these outer layers of skin.

Chemical peels can be done in different depths. Some are deeper and are used for those with very severe scars or wrinkles that penetrate to the epidermis.

Some are referred to as superficial peels, and these only take off the uppermost layers of skin.

In both types of procedures, new skin grows back that is smoother and more radiant than before.

However, the recovery time for chemical peels can also be several months depending upon its depth. If you opt for superficial peels, you may need to repeat this procedure many times over.

soft tissue fillers

Imagine being able to plump up your wrinkles from the inside out. Soft tissue fillers are designed to do just that. They typically contain fat and collagen and are injected into the wrinkle site. The skin has more volume and so looks less wrinkled and more radiant.

Soft tissue fillers usually involve a short recovery time and only typically have redness and slight bruising as side effects, but typically need to be repeated every few months.

face lift

A face lift is not as simple as cutting parts of your skin and reconnecting it to a higher portion of your face, as some might think. The muscles and nerves under the skin need to be moved and adjusted as well.

These muscles under the skin are typically tightened as the face is lifted and reconnected. It is a very delicate procedure that involves weeks of recovery time. Wrinkles are reduced with face lifts because the skin itself is tightened as well, smoothing out the surface of it.



A face lift can last for five to ten years or even longer, depending on the patient and the doctor.

These days there are procedures that can be considered partial face lifts, where only certain areas of the face or neck are addressed. This might work well for those with loose jowls around the chin line or who have more wrinkles in the forehead than anywhere else.

CONSIDERATIONS

No one can make the decision for you as to whether or not you should go through with any of these procedures that we've outlined, but there are some things that you may want to consider very carefully before you agree to any of them. After all, these are all actual cosmetic procedures and therefore are rather serious and also carry some risk as well.

cost

Cosmetic procedures such as these are not covered by insurance. They can be very costly, and most need to be repeated eventually in order for the result to be long lasting. There is nothing that can hold off the effects of time and age, so of course you will need to have regular procedures in order to maintain the effect.

Whether or not you choose to finance such options or are able to save up for them is your decision alone, but do remember that no procedure is a permanent cure.

risk

Every single procedure mentioned involves some risk, including:

- infection
- excessive redness or swelling of the treatment area
- scarring
- headaches
- vomiting
- nausea
- allergic reaction
- flu-like symptoms
- rash
- muscle weakness
- bruising and tenderness of the treatment area

You may need to take antibiotics or other medications for some time after the treatment and of course this too adds to the cost.

expectations

It's so easy to be taken in by slick marketing brochures that a dermatologist may offer you and think that your skin is going to look as smooth and clear as those on the cover.

In reality a patient rarely gets the actual result that he or she was expecting, although usually the results are much better than when they first arrived at the doctor's office. However, you need to be honest with yourself about what you think your results will be as opposed to what your doctor may inform you.

ABOUT BOTOX

Look at the smooth face of any Hollywood celebrity and chances are you'll start thinking of the term Botox. Many people have the thought in their head that Botox is some magic cure for wrinkles that everyone else is taking advantage of. Since so many stars and starlets are supposedly using this "magic pill" for wrinkles, what's to stop you from doing the same?

Before you start hunting for the nearest dermatologist that offers this injection or run out to the nearest Botox party, there are some things you would do well to consider about this treatment.

WHAT BOTOX IS

Obviously before you can make a decision about whether or not to actually go the Botox route, you need to know exactly what this treatment is and what's contained inside those injections.

Notice what the Food and Drug Administration says about Botox:

"Botox is a drug made from a toxin produced by the bacterium Clostridium



Botox injections are a very serious matter that deserve serious consideration.

botulinum. It's the same toxin that causes a life-threatening type of food poisoning called botulism. Doctors use it in small doses to treat health problems, including:

- Temporary removal of facial wrinkles
- Severe underarm sweating
- Cervical dystonia - a neurological disorder that causes severe neck and shoulder muscle contractions
- Blepharospasm - uncontrollable blinking
- Strabismus - misaligned eyes
- Migraine headaches
- Incontinence
- Spastic disorders including those related to stroke, multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy
- TMJ
- Diabetic neuropathy

Botox injections work by weakening or paralyzing certain muscles or by blocking certain nerves. The effects last about three to four months. Side effects can include pain at the injection site, flu-like symptoms, headache and upset stomach. Injections in the face may also cause temporary drooping eyelids. You should not use Botox if you are pregnant or breast feeding."¹

Notice that Botox is used not just for facial wrinkles but for migraines and excessive sweating, among other conditions.

When the face receives an injection of Botox, the muscle is weakened and cannot contract the way it normally would. Therefore the lines smooth out because of not being used and not making that same crease in the area of the injection. Typically a natural facial expression is still possible because of the small area of the injection site.

¹ www.FDA.gov

Usually Botox is used in conjunction with other procedures such as chemical peels, laser treatments, and dermal fillers.

SIDE EFFECTS

Botox takes only a few minutes to apply and usually has very little recovery time. The most common side effects are:

- Headache.
- Bruising.
- Flulike symptoms
- Drooping eyelid (ptosis)
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dizziness
- Redness at the injection site
- Reduced blinking
- Weakness in the muscles of the face

There still needs to be more research done on the long-term side effects of Botox injections.

CONSIDERATIONS

While many think of Botox as the best thing for wrinkles these days, of course it is not without its considerations and warnings.

side effects and complications

Recently a U.S. consumer group demanded that Botox come with strong warnings following the death of 16 patients after the botulinum poisoning contained in Botox spread throughout their body:

"Public Citizen asked U.S. authorities to require the strongest possible warning, highlighted in a "black box," on Allergan Inc's Botox and Solstice Neuroscience Inc's Myobloc.

Botox is famous for smoothing facial wrinkles but also has approved medical uses such as treating cervical dystonia, or rigid neck muscles. Myobloc is cleared only for the neck condition.

Both injections are made with forms of the botulinum toxin, which can paralyze muscles.

Public Citizen said it reviewed 180 reports submitted to the Food and Drug Administration by manufacturers involving patients injected with Botox or Myobloc. The reports detailed cases of muscle weakness, difficulty swallowing or aspiration pneumonia, a serious condition caused by breathing a foreign material into the lungs.

Reports to the FDA do not prove a product caused a particular problem, but the agency uses them to look for patterns of potential complications.

Officials at Allergan, Solstice and the FDA could not immediately be reached for comment.

Sixteen of the cases reported were fatal, including four involving children under 18, Public Citizen said. Some patients were hospitalized.

Dr. Sidney Wolfe, director of Public Citizen's Health Research Group, said such problems can occur if botulinum toxin spreads from the injection site to the esophagus, causing partial paralysis. Instructions for Botox and Myobloc mention the issue but it is easy to miss, he said.

Public Citizen asked the FDA to order a black-box warning to highlight the concern, plus a letter to doctors. The agency also should require a consumer-friendly guide explaining the risks that would be handed out by doctors when the drug is injected, the group said.

"These significantly improved warnings to doctors and patients would increase the likelihood of earlier medical intervention when symptoms of adverse reactions to botulinum toxin first appear, and could prevent more serious complications, including death," Public Citizen said in a petition to the FDA.

The group said European regulators have warned physicians to watch for signs of botulinum toxin complications, most recently in March 2007."²

All of the side effects of Botox have yet to be learned. There still needs to be much research done to regarding the long-term use of Botox as well. Typically Botox administration is successful and without many complications other than the side effects we've listed here, but there still needs to be much research.

cost

Botox treatments typically cost upwards of five hundred dollars per site, and sometimes even more. And because the effects are only temporary, this means that you may actually wind up spending thousands of dollars every year for the results you're looking for.

Botox of course is not covered by insurance, so this means you would either need to go into debt or somehow save enough money for repeated treatments.

long-term effects

The use of Botox for cosmetic procedures and for the curing of wrinkles has not been around long enough for scientists and doctors to really understand the long-term effects that its regular use will have on a patient.

Realizing that Botox is derived from an actual poison should make anyone stop and think seriously about its use, and especially about repeated use. It's so easy to think that all the Hollywood starlets are doing it and that they haven't suffered any long-term consequences, but remember that you don't always know the real truth or the whole truth about cosmetic procedures when it comes to celebrities. Who knows what problems they've experienced because of prolonged Botox use that they are just not sharing with the general public?

Again, no one can make this decision for you, but you do need to consider seriously that there have already been serious side effects from this treatment option.

² As reported by MSNBC.

CHOOSING BOTOX

If you do choose to have Botox treatments, it's imperative that you choose a dermatologist or medical doctor for its application.

There has been a trend that has developed in recent years of people have so-called Botox parties where a stylist from the local salon services many people in one afternoon while everyone relaxes with wine and cheese while waiting for their turn. While this sounds all fabulous and fancy, remember that Botox is derived from a poison that is being directly injected into your skin. This is not like getting your hair colored or having your ears pierced - and chances are you wouldn't do either of those with anyone other than a professional!

Choosing someone that is not a licensed physician to administer your Botox is foolish and dangerous.

NATURAL REMEDIES

If you're not quite ready for Botox or dermabrasion or anything else so harsh, there are some natural remedies you can try for wrinkles and for taking care of your skin overall.

Each function and part of the body relies on specific chemicals to keep it active and healthy, and each part of the body needs different elements for it specifically. For instance, muscles are made up of mostly protein, and so anyone looking to build muscle needs to eat an adequate amount of protein. Fiber is necessary for the digestive system, and fiber binds to food and makes it easier to digest and move through the intestines. Persons without an adequate amount of fiber in their diet will typically experience constipation, bloating, and other digestive problems.

So it is with our skin. There are certain elements that help keep it healthy and vital, and we'll discuss these here.

VITAMIN E OIL

Vitamin E oil is thought by many to be a magic trick for skin and a very important part of any skincare regimen. It's natural and good for the skin overall. Vitamin E is an essential part of skin's composition and keeps it moisturized and flexible. A lack of vitamin E in your system will result in dry skin, whereas an adequate amount will moisturize and hydrate your skin.

You can use vitamin E oil in caplet form by taking one every day, or you can use vitamin E oil directly on the skin. This oil is typically sold at any pharmacy in small jars; many people use a small makeup wedge or sponge to blot the oil on their face. You can even do this under your makeup, but is especially important at night.

Foods high in vitamin E include:

- Wheat germ
- Almonds
- Sunflower seed
- Sunflower oil
- Safflower oil
- Hazelnuts
- Peanut butter
- Peanuts
- Corn oil
- Spinach
- Broccoli
- Soybean oil
- Kiwi
- Mango
- Spinach

Try increasing these foods in your diet to see if this does not help your skin.

WATER

There cannot be enough said about water and your skin's health overall. This hydration from the inside will help keep your skin soft and supple. A lack of water only means dry skin.

Think of your skin as being like a sponge. When the sponge is wet, it's soft and supple. When the sponge is dry, it's brittle.

Adding moisture from the outside is important, but probably not as important as being adequately hydrated from the inside. When you don't have enough water in your system, not only will the body keep from sending moisture to your skin

but it may very well absorb some of the hydration on your skin for other vital organs. By depriving your body of adequate water supplies, you're just starving your skin.

If you can't really drink water throughout the day, try these tricks:

- Have a half a glass of water before every meal. Make it a part of eating, just as you would taking vitamin pills or other medication. Half a glass should be manageable enough for everyone.
- Keep water bottles in your refrigerator. Usually if they're cold enough they're more palatable.
- Try drink mixes such as Crystal Light or sugar-free Kool-Aid.
- Most fruit juices are very high in sugar content, so add just one cup of fruit juice to a gallon of water. This gives your water some taste while cutting down on the amount of sugar you would normally get.
- Try eating foods with more water in them. This includes water-based soups (not the creamy varieties) and chili.
- Fresh fruit is a great source of moisture and hydration. Those that are very juicy are going to be the ones with the most moisture content. Try:
 - watermelon
 - cantaloupe, musk melon
 - apples
 - oranges
 - berries of any variety, but especially blueberries and strawberries
 - tomatoes (yes, tomatoes are technically a fruit, not a vegetable)
 - onions
 - peppers
- Leafy green vegetables are also very good for adding hydration to your system. If you don't get enough leafy greens in your diet, here are some simple ways to add them:
 - Have a small salad with every dinner, regardless of what else you're eating. Even a few bites of lettuce with dressing helps.

- Add some spinach to an omelet.
- Make sure all your sandwiches have lettuce and tomato on them. You can also try spinach as well.
- Sometimes we avoid drinking water because it's not right in front of us. Have water bottles at your desk at work; keep one in the refrigerator so that you always have a cold bottle ready.

All of these remedies are good for adding hydration to your skin through your diet and by increasing your fluid intake overall. Whatever you need to do to add water to your diet, try it.

EXERCISE

We've already touched on why exercise is so important for your skin's health, but let's consider this again.

When you exercise, you are making your heart beat faster and therefore it pumps more blood to your entire system. Of course your blood is circulating all the time, but by exercising you are bringing fresh, warm blood to your entire body. This fresh blood is full of nutrients that your system needs, including your skin.

Blood also acts as a filter for impurities. The body has built-in "janitorial" work that it does, and the blood helps with this. Dead cells are washed away by the circulating blood, as are other agents such as free radicals. This fresh blood also means more white blood cells, which are the cells that fight disease and impurities.

When you exercise, your heart is also pumping harder; the blood pushes itself to the top of your skin layers unlike it does when you're at rest. You are therefore getting fresh blood, oxygen, nutrients, and hydration to every layer of your skin when you exercise.

You may notice your face and other areas of your skin turning red when you exercise; this is the result of that increased blood circulation and is a good sign. Of course you don't want to overexert yourself when you exercise, but when your face turns red like that during exercise it means your blood is doing its job.

Exercise also loosens your muscles and increases your breathing rate. These too allow oxygen to move more freely through your system and benefits your skin.

When you lift weights or move around during exercise, you are helping your skin become more pliable and are keeping it elastic and flexible.

This increase in your breath rate also means more fresh oxygen in your system that is also being applied to your skin. This oxygen too is a necessary nutrient to your body and your skin, and also helps to rid your skin of impurities as well.

HOMEMADE MASKS

Making facial masks are a great way of trying natural remedies for your skin. Because they are typically made from ingredients you get right from your supermarket, they are easy enough for anyone and are usually very effective in adding moisture back into your face and reducing redness, breakouts, and so on.



The simplest mask might be a paste made from a little oatmeal or cornmeal and water. You rub this gently into your skin, allow it to dry, and then wash it off.

Here are some other simple recipes:

Mash together 1/2 of a banana with one tablespoon honey and two tablespoons sour cream. Apply this gently to the face - don't rub it in - and let it set for about 10 minutes. Wipe it gently with a damp cloth.

Combine half of a cucumber with 1 tablespoon of yogurt and one teaspoon of honey in a blender. Mix until a paste. Apply to your face and let dry, then gently wipe with a damp cloth.

Avocado is great for the face and is the main ingredient in many salon or spa treatments. Mash half of an avocado with a fork and apply it to your face. Let it set for about 20 minutes and then wipe off with a damp cloth.

Cucumber is another great ingredient for the face and is also used in many salon or spa treatments. You can puree 1/2 of a peeled cucumber in a blender with a tablespoon of yogurt or honey. Apply to the face and let it set for about 20 minutes and then wipe with a damp cloth.

The acidic properties in strawberries make them a great ingredient as well. You can add a handful of them minus the stems in a blender with a teaspoon of honey

or yogurt. Apply to face and let set for about 15 minutes and then wipe with a damp cloth.

Mix 1-1/2 teaspoons of honey with a carton of plain yogurt and a teaspoon of lemon juice; add an egg and blend well. Apply this to your face and let set for about 15 minutes before wiping off with a damp cloth.

Homemade facials are not that hard to invest yourself. If your skin reacts well to honey, add it to some avocado or whatever your recipe. If the oatmeal scrub leaves you looking fresh and radiant, repeat this every few days. Remember that your skin is unique to you and will react to different treatments, so don't hesitate to try some new things.

SALON TREATMENTS

Somewhere between natural remedies and treatments from your doctor are salon and spa treatments. These include facials of all sorts, masks, and so on. While they will vary from salon to salon, there are some common elements in each type of treatment and what it is supposed to accomplish.

STANDARD FACIALS

A facial typically just refers to any treatment of the face offered by the salon. They will be different in their ingredients and application. They are typically meant to stimulate the blood circulation around the face which of course is good for the skin and also typically include the application of a mask of some sort. These masks might be moisturizing for those with dry skin, cleansing for those with problem skin, rejuvenating for those with dead skin cells and such that need to be removed, or any combination of these.

anti-aging facials

Those with aging or more mature skin may enjoy an anti-aging facial, which typically uses vitamin C and alpha hydroxyl to gently remove the top surface of skin and then add moisture back to it.

These facials usually plump up the skin and stimulate collagen growth so that the skin looks younger and more radiant.

biolift facials

These facials target the area under the eyes in order to lift and tone them, eliminating bags and dark circles in this area.

natural ingredient facials

Some clients prefer only natural ingredients for the masks used on their face and many salons offer facials that contain only natural ingredients. These are usually cucumber, avocado, honey, oatmeal, cornmeal, and things such as these. A good salon will know which combination is best for whatever type of skin you have but these are usually very good for those with sensitive skin as well.

STEAM

Using steam is meant to open the pores of your face for a deep and thorough cleansing and to reintroduce moisture back into the face as well. Warm steam will also stimulate blood flow in the areas of the face. This is also very relaxing and can help tense muscles ease and de-stress, making the skin on the face look more radiant and healthy as well.

Salons typically use a small stand that generates steam while you're lying on your back, rather than the types of steamers you purchase at the pharmacy.

FACIAL MASSAGE

The purpose of a facial massage is to get your muscles relaxed and ready for a facial mask. This also helps to de-stress your face and stimulate blood flow as well.

A facial massage usually involves the areas of the neck and shoulders as well, as tension in these areas can affect the look of the skin on the face. Facial massage can also help your sinuses to open up, unclog, and function more effectively. This helps to drain toxins and such from your sinuses and therefore away from you skin.

EXFOLIATION

As it's important to exfoliate when you're at home, a salon will do the same. Usually you will have a mild scrub applied to your face and the specialist will gently rub it into your skin and then wipe it away with a damp cloth.

The purpose of exfoliation in the salon is to remove all the dead and dull skin cells and expose the healthier skin underneath. This also means that new,

healthy skin will grow in its place. This new healthy skin will look more radiant and younger, and will be without wrinkles.

CHOOSING SALON TREATMENTS FOR YOUR WRINKLES

Many of these treatments work wonders for not just preventing wrinkles but for reducing or eliminating the ones you already have.

Salon treatments can be tailor made just for you and a good specialist will be able to suggest a certain facial or combination of treatments that will be the best for you and you alone.

Having your face massaged by a professional also helps with blood circulation as well. This too helps eliminates wrinkles.

So while you may not be ready to go under the knife and have a doctor start cutting and injecting you, but your pharmacy products just aren't doing much either, consider visiting your local salon. Having a good facial on a regular basis can work wonders for your skin.

STRESS AND YOUR SKIN

Not many people make the connection between stress and your skin's condition. Many people think that what we feel emotionally has nothing to do with our physical well-being and may dismiss this connection as being nothing more than new age hocus pocus.

In reality, the things we go through mentally and emotionally can take quite a toll on us physically, and the condition of our skin is no exception.

Why does stress do this? How does it affect the body and specifically the skin in this way?

STRESS AND THE SYSTEM

Humans have many built-in mechanisms for dealing with threats, and stress is an end result of something that we translate as a threat.

Some may argue this point and say that stress is not the result of a threat; you feel stressed in rush hour traffic but don't feel as if this is a threat to your well-being. But remember that when humans deal with threats, it's more than just to our physical safety. As humans we need things other than food, clothing and shelter - we need love, respect, companionship, a sense of security, and so on.



Do you know why stress affects your skin condition and causes wrinkles?

threats to emotional well-being

We feel stress on the job because if we don't deliver or perform our job as promised, we may be fired and then wind up homeless - that's a threat to our physical safety. But typically our stress is not so deep-rooted. We feel stress on the job because our boss yelling at us is a threat to our respect and sense of security.

Think of how stresses we feel in everyday life are really a threat to our emotional health and well-being. We're stressed over a fight with our spouse because this might mean he or she would leave us, and then we would be without that necessary love and companionship. We feel stress when we're arguing with a bill collector because this person obviously doesn't respect us.

stress and physical well-being

It's not very often that one may be in grave physical danger these days; we're not cavemen living out on the plains that need to fend off vicious animals or that don't have enough food for the winter. But sometimes it is our physical well-being that is threatened and that causes us stress.

Getting bad news from your doctor might mean a threat to your physical well-being. Losing your job might mean no food to eat. Worried about someone breaking into your home at night means a threat to your person and your physical safety. People in many countries are worried about terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and things such as these that are very real and that are in the news every day, and that might threaten one's physical safety as well.

So while we're not living out on the plains worrying about every noise we hear in the distance, we do have many things that we worry about today that are threats to our physical safety and well-being.

HOW STRESS AFFECTS US PHYSICALLY

You've probably heard of the "fight or flight" reaction that is natural and instinctive in humans. When threatened, we prepare to either fight the threat or run away from it.

Even if the stress or threat is not physical but mental or emotional, we immediately respond by either preparing to fight it or flee from it.

Our bodies do this by increasing the heart rate so that there is more blood available to our muscles. We then send this blood to the important muscles of the legs, in case we need to flee.

When the body does this, it also diverts blood and oxygen from other areas of the body. It's not unusual for someone to feel lightheaded and to have a tingling sensation in their fingers when they're under stress. This is because there is less blood to these extremities; the body is sending it to the legs to get ready to run.

And of course this means that there is less blood and oxygen going to the skin as well, including the skin on our face and hands where the effects of this reaction are more obvious.

OTHER EFFECTS OF STRESS

Persons who are under constant or extreme stress often report having more heart attacks, cases of heart disease, strokes, and other such conditions. As a matter of fact, prolonged stress is linked to a host of diseases and conditions.

Much of these problems can be traced back to this diversion of necessary blood and oxygen to the leg muscles and from it being depleted from other areas of the body. And when the heart is overworked unnaturally like this, it means that it's being damaged as well.

Stress also typically leads to fatigue, mood swings, irritability, an inability to make proper decisions, a lack of concentration, and other such maladies. Why is this? Simple because the brain is meant to think about and handle only so many things at once. When you're under stress you're typically in a heightened state of awareness. This too goes back to the "fight or flight" response. You need to be aware of your surroundings to decide if you should flee or stay and confront your threat.

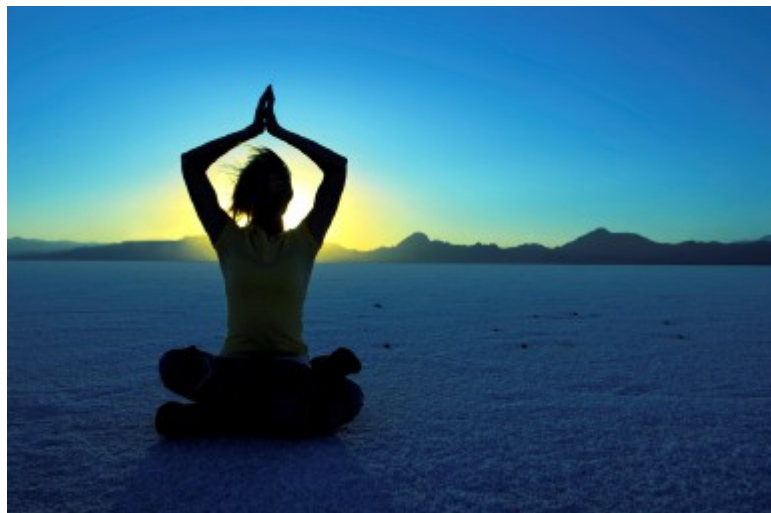
When the brain is in overdrive for so long, it begins to show signs of this undue wear. We get frustrated more easily because that source of our stress is taking center stage in our mind while other things are competing for our attention. This causes irritability and fatigue.

STRESS AND THE SKIN

When your skin is deprived of necessary blood and oxygen, it's going to naturally dry up. This is what causes premature wrinkles.

Stress is a part of our daily life and there's nothing we can do to eliminate it completely. However, there are some things we can do to reduce it:

- Exercise is a great stress reliever. Exercise releases endorphins, the "feel good" chemicals or hormones in our brain that help us to remain calm and relaxed. It also helps to increase blood circulation so those parts of our body that are being depleted of blood and oxygen because of our stress are going to get their necessary nutrients.
- Being proactive is also a great stress reliever. Sometimes we feel stressed when we feel trapped and helpless. We feel stressed on the job because we feel we have no options. We feel helpless when it's time to pay the bills because we have no money. By being proactive and doing what we can to change our situation, we feel less stressed. So do what you can to correct or adjust your situation. If you are facing economic problems, try getting a second job. You might think this will add to your stress but in reality it will probably make you feel better to be taking control of your finances. If your regular job is very stressful, think about finding a new one. At the very least, knowing that you have some options can do a lot to eliminate stress.
- Try yoga, meditation, or deep-breathing exercises. These things force your body to de-stress itself.
- Practice turning your mind off to your stressful situation. Force yourself to leave work at work and to not think of these things when you're home or at lunch. It might take some effort, but it can be done!



You can de-stress if you make the effort!

- Be sure to watch your diet when you're under stress. Caffeine will just add to your edginess, as will excessive sugar. And since stress takes this good blood and oxygen away from your digestive system as well, be sure you're getting enough fiber in the form of whole grains, fruits and vegetables. This helps to relieve digestive disorders that are common when one is under stress, including constipation, bloating, gas, and so on.
- Talk to someone about your stress. You don't want to constantly complain about your problems or dwell on them as this just adds to your stress, but sometimes just venting our feelings is a great stress reliever. We can then too be reminded of the fact that we're not the only ones going through these things, and sometimes our friends or family can help us find the humor in a situation or laugh about it.
- Don't let stress keep you from enjoying other things in life. No matter how stressful your job, go out at night or bring home a good movie. Visit that museum exhibit we want to see or go away for the weekend. Even if we're sick or are having problems in our marriage, we still need to find things we enjoy doing rather than letting these problems rob us of everything we love in life. This would only add to our stress.

If nothing else, try to put your stressful situation in perspective. You might have an obnoxious boss, but he or she doesn't run your life and isn't really a reflection on your worth as a person. If you're having difficulty in your marriage, remind yourself that many people are as well and this is just part of being married. Work hard to correct these problems but remember that you probably still have many things in your life that are positive and worthwhile.

HELPING THE SKIN

If you're still having skin problems after you've done everything to de-stress your life, then take some steps to make up for this. Be extra vigilant about cleansing and moisturizing at night. If you can, remove all your makeup during the day and add more moisturizer.

Wearing a sunscreen is going to be especially important when you're stressed. Your skin will be naturally more dry and prone to sensitivity to the elements. You also need to cover yourself when you're outside during the colder months as well.

Be sure to drink plenty of water and other fluids when under stress. That hydration from your skin that's being depleted because your body is diverting it to your legs and other muscles needs to be replenished.

It's also a good idea to be careful of what products you're using for your face as well. You might want to switch to products that are meant for sensitive skin. These are usually free of perfumes and dyes, both of which can irritate your skin and even more so when you're stressed. Go without makeup as much as possible to give your pores a chance to breathe.

So while you can't eliminate stress completely, you can get a better understanding of how it affects your skin and realize the things you need to do to counteract its effects.

CONCLUSION:

10 QUICK STEPS TO WRINKLE-FREE SKIN NOW!

Wrinkles are a part of life and there's probably nothing you can do to keep yourself from getting them completely. Even if you lived in a cave and out of the sun for your entire life, old age will eventually take its toll.

But you can prevent many wrinkles and treat your skin in such a way that eliminates or reduces the wrinkles you now have. Here are 10 quick reminders of how you can do just that:

1. Drink water, and plenty of it.

Water is probably the most critical part of smooth skin. The body needs hydration for all its systems, and if you're dehydrated the skin will be one of the last organs to get this necessary nutrient. So drink water every day. Do whatever you need to do to get adequate amounts in your system. Sneak it into your daily routine, or find a water substitute that you can drink such as sports drinks, fruit juice, Crystal Light, and so on.

2. Get your exercise.

Exercise is great not just for your body's shape, but for the shape your skin is in as well. When you exercise regularly, you increase your blood and oxygen levels and these two elements bring needed nourishment to your skin. Blood also takes away impurities and helps fight free radicals, two important parts of having healthy skin. You don't need to train for a marathon to be successful in adding exercise to your system, but you should be getting quality exercise every single day.

3. Take your makeup off at night.

Even the best makeup products still get in your pores and the folds of your skin and can dry it up if left on for undue lengths of time. It's important that even the best makeup be removed at night so that your skin can breathe and heal itself while you sleep.

4. Watch how you cleanse your skin.

Soap and many astringents are very drying to the skin and can be damaging. Switch to cleansers that are meant for the face and that are made for sensitive skin or that contain moisturizers. This is true even if you have oily skin. Being too vigorous with how you cleanse your skin will strip it of its natural oils and make your situation worse.

5. Add moisture back in.

Again, even if you have oily skin you need to add moisture to your skin. If you don't, you can actually be sending those oil glands into overtime as they try to make up for the oil you've stripped away.

Your skin needs to be moisturized at least twice a day, in the morning and at night. You can also moisturize during the day if possible. Get a light moisturizer or use vitamin E oil.

6. Use sunscreen and stay out of the sun as much as possible.

The sun causes premature aging and wrinkling of the skin and is one of the main culprits for wrinkles. It's important to stay out of the sun as much as possible and to use sunscreen when you are in the sun. If you purposely tan, stop! Tanning salons and laying out in the sun are incredibly dangerous for your skin and do nothing but damage it.

7. Bundle up against the cold.

Cold weather is already going to make it more difficult for your skin to produce moisture and hydration, and being out in the cold wind without proper covering just makes it worse. Make sure you're wearing a scarf and gloves and cover up exposed areas of your skin as much as possible.

Wind burn is just part of the problem when it comes to cold weather. Having your face and other areas of your skin consistently exposed to cold weather is just going to continue to deplete the moisture from it.

8. Exfoliate, but don't overdo it!

It's good for your skin to get that layer of dead skin cells and other impurities off, but don't overdo it! Too much exfoliating means that you're just stripping your skin of its natural oils and hydration.

Make sure you add moisture back in after you exfoliate. Try your regular moisturizer or some vitamin E oil.

9. Watch your diet.

People who don't eat right typically don't look healthy, and those who do watch their diet usually look much more radiant. This isn't a coincidence; what we put into our mouths has a lot to do with how we look on the outside.

Bulk up on the fresh fruit and vegetables. These contain all those vital nutrients that we need for healthy skin.

10. Stop smoking.

This may be one of the more difficult tips to put into practice, but one of the most vital. Smoking does damage to every single pore and cell of our body, and especially to the skin and face. Nicotine is a toxin that is carried to every cell by the blood, and cigarette smoke chokes the area around the face and neck.

There is absolutely nothing good or redeemable about smoking. Quitting will not only benefit your skin but your entire system as well.

So there you have it. Ten quick tips and tricks to combating wrinkles. While there's no guarantee how any of these will work, they are things that anyone can put into practice. And if you do, you're sure to have skin that is more healthy, radiant, and wrinkle-free.