

The Road to Radiance: A Skin Care Primer for the Bride

By Suzanne Patterson

Every bride-to-be has her own unique beauty that is special, and her wedding day is the grandest of occasions when she will want to look her very best. Careful effort has been put into choosing the perfect gown, the flowers, the venue... and her loveliness is in the eyes of the audience as she begins the walk down the aisle towards marriage. You are making a lasting memory in those moments, so what is it they will remember most about you, and that will be reflected in your photos and video long after the event?

Vibrancy.....radiance...sparkle.....glow.....that special beauty that emanates from a lady in one of the happiest events in her life. What is the point of reference to these often heard words of splendor about brides on their wedding day? It's your skin, which is the resonance of all that is emoting within you. It reflects your attractiveness as well as your quality of health, your mood, facial expressions, actions and emotions. It is also the important canvas that upholds the enhancement and decoration with color, otherwise known as makeup!

The Physics Behind Beauty:

So what really projects that special radiance or glow? Skin physics translates that to mean that the tones of the skin are more translucent, thus a natural flush or brightness to the skin is noticeable. This surface area of the skin is referred to as the stratum corneum in the epidermis layer, and it reflects optimal cell metabolism, pH balance, and blood circulation in skin that is free of surface clogging cell waste and build-up, and irritation from damage. The eye interprets this kind of skin health as a clean looking radiance, a vitality that springs from a high state of well-being.

Skin that is uncared for, dry, flaky, or broken out for a variety of reason causes the stratum corneum to become more opaque in appearance, giving a dull, pulled down look, and the appearance of skin tone that looks slack or uneven textured. The eye interprets this as a kind of pallor to skin, a look that brings down features or emphasizes less than desirable characteristics.

Skin is affected by many factors both internally and externally. Daily exposure to external elements, along with stress, hormones, and medications can play havoc with the skin. Cigarettes, alcohol, and caffeinated products constrict blood vessel flow, oxygen, and nutrients to the skin. A diet heavy with fast food or junk products, lack of sufficient water in-take and poor quality food sources further decrease nutritional support for skin. Constant exposure to a polluted environment causes a chain reaction of skin cells being attacked and scavenged by a process called "free radical oxidation". Sun exposure is probably the biggest enemy of skin and causes rapid acceleration of skin cell death which results in premature aging. This all

leads to permanent skin damage, and increased chances of developing skin cancer.

Skin Intelligence:

The most proactive organ of the body is the skin, and it can be quite vocal about the abuse, neglect, or attacks it takes on a daily basis. Your skin is the first line of defense against external invasions from environmental elements and sometimes it shows the results of the battles. Just beneath the skin's surface are nerve cells that connect with the next layer (dermis) and act as the skin's stimulus to respond immediately to whatever is happening on the surface. Hormone receptors are also lodged in skin cells and a surge of hormones, such as cortisol (the stress hormone), can kick off a variety of skin reactions such as acne, eczema, hives, rosacea, etc.

Your skin can contract, expand, turn colors, or erupt in a variety of ways (both topical and systemic) to protect your internal organs from serious attack, such as viral or bacterial invasion. Yet, we tend to think of skin as more of a partner in a beauty regimen rather than the effective warrior on a battlefield of skin assaults. However, if you can combine both thoughts as you care for and make choices in how you live daily in your skin then you will have a much better appreciation and understanding of what this amazing organ does. It is quite possible to enhance and improve what nature and genes have bestowed upon you, and minimize the abuses and neglect of the past.

Nurturing the Skin You're in:

Skin responds quite well to tender loving care and targeted treatments, and there are things you can do on a daily basis that will help put you on the road to clarity and radiance in looking your very best on that special day, and every day. There are two sides to this coin, however, and it begins with what we put into and do for our bodies such as a nutritious diet, regular exercise, adequate sleep, while minimizing stress, curtailing alcohol intake, and avoiding tobacco products. Most importantly is protecting the skin daily from the sun and other environmental conditions by using a targeted skin protecting regimen.

First, a diet high in fiber, nutrients, and plenty of water in-take helps the body to flush out waste and toxins that can add to skin problems. The body requires a certain amount of protein, vitamins, minerals, and essential acids to repair and build skin cells that have been damaged. Anti-oxidant nutrients help protect our skin and reduce the free radical oxidation damage that occurs daily. Steering clear of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco will help prevent restriction in your circulatory system which plays a crucial role in skin metabolism and cellular regeneration process.

Secondly, proper topical care for your skin type with a targeted daily regimen, that includes a good broad spectrum sunscreen, is what greatly adds to keeping skin looking youthful and healthy. It is a proven fact that effective skin care can compensate some for biological and environmental influences which can prevent skin from achieving its optimal appearance. Choose minimal ingredient products that clean without stripping down the pH mantle of the skin. Use moisturizers that are free of petroleum or animal based oils, and avoid those that leave a greasy residue. Control sebum (natural oil) production on skin to keep blemishes and break-outs in check.

Scared Straight About Sun Tanning:

The most important item of your beauty regimen is the use of a sunscreen/block that has a minimum SPF of 15 to protect the skin from UVA and UVB ray damage from the sun. Ever since Coco Chanel declared tanning as the "in" thing during the 1920s, it became associated with "healthy" and youthful looking skin, even a kind of status.

The stark reality is, that a tan is an injury from the sun that has caused quite a bit of damage in exchange for a "little bit of color". Permanent underlying damage to both cells and genes occurs at the DNA level every time skin absorbs direct rays of ultraviolet sunlight. Some cells are killed immediately, while others are wounded and spilling out chemicals that irritate tiny blood vessels. This puts into action a massive irritation that begins to turn pink, and ultimately that tell-tale crimson color sign of a burn.

UV rays also breakdown collagen and elastin fibers in the tanning process that result in faster drooping and sagging of skin as we age. It also weakens the network of blood vessels that cause spider veins. Free radical production also kicks in, those corrosive little molecules that damage and alter cellular DNA that is responsible for cell renewal. Long after a tan fades the genetic damage remains, showing itself later on as age spots, brown spots, mottled pigmented areas, excessive moles, and the biggest threat of all: skin cancers. A tan doesn't seem very pretty after all when you put it in the light of physical reality!

Don't think that tanning salons are a safer alternative, and in fact, they are more dangerous than the sun! Tanning booths concentrate the amount of UV light penetration to skin in a shorter length of time, and major studies have consistently shown that sun bed tanning greatly increases the risk of both basal cell and squamous cell carcinoma skin cancers which can develop in to malignant melanoma. Simply put, there is no UV ray exposure that is safe for skin without protection.

Advancements in the Science of Skin Care:

Forewarned is forearmed, as the saying goes, so hopefully you now have a resolve to take good care of the skin you own, because it is the only one you

will ever have. Even if you have been careless in the past, you can stem the tide of future damage with a good skin care regimen and smooth out some of the mistakes of the past.

In the last decade there has been an explosion of products and techniques as a result of significant discoveries, advancements, and improvements in dermatology science. The development and marketing of topical drugs, advancements in cosmetic procedures, and state of the art ingredients in cosmetics have given people an edge over the aging process as well as repairing and healing skin from damage caused abuse and neglect, even disease.

Chemical peels, dermabrasions, laser therapies, hydroxy and glycolic acids, retinoid compounds, state of the art serums, and enzyme treatments are just a few of the many options that have given the consumer solid ground to slow down and even reverse the signs of aged and damaged skin, while improving the clarity, texture, tone, and cellular response of the skin. Some of these products and methods can actually help remove some of the surface damage from sun exposure, while others can help heal skin breakouts and diseases.

Sunscreen is probably the best beauty ingredient in your skin care line-up for daytime wear. Look for products that have hybrid ingredients, meaning they contain both a physical blocker (such as titanium dioxide) and chemical blocker (such as avobenzone), have been proven consistently in major studies to be the most effective in broad spectrum protection. Make sure your sunscreen product of choice is formulated with each of these ingredients, or a combination of known chemical and physical ingredients that can provide the highest quality broad spectrum protection

Summary:

Your wedding is going to be one of your most memorable and photographed events of your life, and keep in mind the most photogenic brides are those who follow their skin care routines religiously. Even the best makeup artist cannot camouflage neglect such as clogged pores, blackheads, or flaky skin. Makeup can create an illusion to correct minor imperfections but it is that natural radiance that vibrates from healthy looking skin.

Whatever your current skin condition, you can begin now to implement better choices to improve and protect the health of your skin. Most importantly, make sure that you include a broad spectrum sun screen as the finishing component in your day time skin care regimen, and that means year-round protection, not just during the summer months. The road to radiance, that special bridal glow, starts with skin that has been properly nourished within and nurtured through a good skin care regimen.