

A Holistic Approach to Anti-ageing and the Face

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Introduction

Over many hundreds of years one of the key areas for the application of personal care products has been the face. The human face is exposed to the elements for most of the year, whether it be bright sunshine in the summer or cold, dry winds in the harshest of winters. It also bears the brunt of other environmental exposure from, for example, traffic fumes, cigarette smoke, etc., so suffers from the effects of both intrinsic and extrinsic ageing. Facial skin can also, through its colour and expressions, reflect many emotions and feelings. Blushing for example, resulting from dilation of blood vessels in the skin, can show embarrassment⁽¹⁾. Thus the face signals many different things in the way that it appears to the casual observer. Over time the skin covering the face changes, dryness may make the skin look rough and scaly, fine lines and wrinkles begin to appear, colouration alters, pores can become enlarged and sagging of the cheeks and jowls is often observed. When all these factors are combined, they result in influencing how old we actually appear or are perceived to be, as opposed to our actual chronological age. Beauty products can be used to change this perception, enhancing certain features such as the lips and eyes to draw the observer's gaze to them or camouflaging and covering up redness, blemishes and less attractive areas to minimise their impact ^(2, 3).

In the following article we will identify the key factors that can affect our appearance and describe changes that can happen over time, the causes of these changes and what can be done to either prevent this happening, rejuvenate the skin or camouflage problem areas.

Wrinkles and Lines

Recently an excellent review of "wrinkle theory" has been produced by Humbert et al.⁽⁴⁾ which gives comprehensive details of the causes and effects of wrinkle formation. It is stated that as age increases, fine and reducible lines evolve to form

permanent wrinkles, one of the earliest and most visible signs of skin ageing, developing mainly on the face, neck and hands (i.e. areas which are both exposed to the elements but also visibly on show) ⁽⁴⁾. Wrinkles appear over time due to changes in the support structures of the skin from chronological ageing but photoageing speeds the process considerably leading to quickly formed, deep wrinkles ⁽⁵⁾. A recent study has shown that facial skin undergoes a considerable change around the age of thirty, showing a step change in wrinkling morphology at the age of thirty three ⁽⁶⁾. It has also been noted that skin surface topography is more important in terms of perceived age than skin colour and that only small changes are needed to alter perceived age significantly ^(7,8). As well as the crow's feet area (at the side of each eye) fine lines and wrinkles were also observed to occur in the forehead, glabella, upper and lower eyelids, nasolabial groove, cheek and corner of the mouth of older volunteers ⁽²⁰⁾.

Fortunately there are a number of excellent products to protect the skin from such damage and further ones which even go some way towards turning back the clock. SPF's go a long way in protecting the skin from UV rays which cause so much of the damage. Most moisturisers now contain at least SPF 15 and a degree of UVA protection but if one is exposed to sunlight for any length of time, a specific sun cream is needed. The newer water phase UV filters, such as Tinosorb M and Tinosorb S Aqua from BASF, allow for efficient UVA and UVB protection without overloading formulations with oils, allowing for light textures.

Retinol has been shown to be an effective treatment for lines and fine wrinkles. It increases cell turnover and stimulates the production of more collagen and elastin. Vitamin C is essential for the synthesis of collagen and is an antioxidant and therefore can help reduce skin damage caused by free radicals. There is a large variety of skin rejuvenation and anti-wrinkle products containing it, such as The Body Shop's Vitamin C collection.