

BEAUTY BAILOUT

When it comes to editing down what you really need for your skin, what's a sound investment and what's expendable? Experts tell us how to avoid a great depression—at least when it comes to our complexions.
By AVA DAWSON

Recession be damned—a girl's still got to have great-looking skin. But a financially prudent outlook has us analyzing every purchase, including our personal arsenals of lotions and potions. Now is the time to stop accumulating skin-care products from random impulse shopping, and start making savvier choices. "Look at the recession as a great opportunity to look at what you really need," says Dr. John Arlette, a dermatologist who runs his own clinic in Calgary.

Of course, the number one non-negotiable is sunscreen with at least SPF 30. "Don't try and save money on sunscreen," warns Dr. Arlette. As a saving tip, he suggests that sunscreen can double as daily moisturizer. "I'd rather have you using a good sunscreen as a moisturizer than a moisturizer with a bit of sunscreen in it," he adds.

Sunscreen aside, do we really need five different skin-care steps? And if our regime needs to be multi-faceted, how do we best distinguish what is essential from what isn't? We asked leading skin experts across Canada to give us the goods on anti-aging, brightening, clarifying and moisturizing solutions, and they told us about the key ingredients and products you need to keep your skin looking like a million bucks, even if your bank account doesn't boast the same balance.

ANTI-AGING

Key ingredients Retinoids, antioxidants, vitamins C and E, peptides, niacinamide, alpha-hydroxy acids, idebenone and ubiquinone (coenzyme Q10).

There are several ingredients that help to repair skin. In the anti-aging arena, antioxidants remain one of the biggest

buzzwords—these multi-taskers combat fine lines, brown spots and other skin damage. Look for the active ingredient vitamin C. "It fills the dermis with new collagen, reducing fine lines," explains Dr. Arlette. "This gives us resilience and elasticity in skin."

"Vitamin C neutralizes free radicals, may minimize the signs of photo damage and may even prevent skin cancer, because it has been shown to enhance or boost the efficacy of the SPF," explains Dr. Frances Jang, dermatologist at Vancouver's Skinworks, a dermatology, laser and plastic-surgery clinic. Other antioxidants that have similar benefits are vitamin E, coffee berry, pomegranate and green tea.

Not new to the anti-aging market but still very effective are exfoliants. "If the skin can tolerate it, use a chemical exfoliant such as glycolic acid to help brighten the skin, reduce brown spots and also help with acne," says Dr. Jang. Retinoids are another ingredient worth investing in—a vitamin A derivative known as Retin-A, it's available by prescription. But it isn't for everyone. "It's one of the few molecules that helps rebuild young collagen," says Dr. Jang. "But if you can't tolerate Retin-A, over-the-counter retinols will give you some improvements."

Bottom line Sunscreen and lots of it, an exfoliant (which can be an exfoliating face wash), at least one antioxidant and, for more advanced damage, you may need to splurge on retinol.

Suggested arsenal Nivea Visage Q10 Plus Advanced Wrinkle Reducer Light (\$21, at drugstores), L'Oréal Paris Revitalift Radiant Smoothing Cream Cleanser (\$13, at drugstores) and Suki Spa Bio 10% Formula Face Serum (\$80, sukipure.com). »



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BRIGHTENING

Key ingredients Vitamin C, giant fennel, lactic acid, licorice root, glucosamine.

A dull complexion or one with vexing sun spots can benefit from brighteners. But cutting corners may not be effective. “Keep in mind that one product is not going to get rid of pigmentation unless it is a product that has been prescribed by a physician,” warns Holly Sherrard, education manager at Toronto’s International Dermal Institute. “Products that work synergistically will give you the best results. Also, a 40-year-old may have to treat their skin longer than someone in their late 20s. The skin-cell renewal rate slows down with age, keeping pigment in the skin longer.”

When choosing a system, again, vitamin C is your go-to skin superstar, as it brightens skin and prevents cell damage. Also, look out for licorice root, which controls melanin formation (which leads to brown spots) and acts as an anti-inflammatory if, for example, your skin is left red after a breakout. Glucosamine interrupts the UV-triggered chemical signal that tells your skin to produce melanin, and hinders the deposit of it into the skin cells, while giant fennel helps lighten surface spots. Sherrard also suggests using an exfoliant that contains a combination of lactic acid, phytic acid, pumpkin-fruit ferment and anti-inflammatories.

Bottom line Use an exfoliating cleanser and toner to remove dull, pigmented cells and reveal newer ones underneath, plus a moisturizer with active brightening ingredients.

Suggested arsenal Dermalogica ChromaWhite TRx Tri-Active Cleanse (\$50, dermalogica.ca), Aveda Enbrightenment Brightening Treatment Toner (\$49, aveda.com), La Roche-Posay Mela-D Dark Spots Daily Anti-Dark Spot Skincare (\$44, at drugstores).

CLARIFYING

Key ingredients Benzoyl peroxide, salicylic acid, glycolic acid.

Nothing is more perplexing for a grown woman than regularly scheduled breakouts. For this problem, no single treatment is right for everyone, explains Dr. Jang, noting that “acne is such an individual program.”

Start with a chemical exfoliant. “Use salicylic acid-based products, which work to clear comedonal acne,” says Dr. Jang, who also suggests an anti-bacterial wash that contains triclosan. That old standby, benzoyl peroxide, is available in gels and lotions in strengths up to five per cent over the counter.

“You could try a single product with only one of these ingredients and, if this fails, a second could be added later,” says Toronto’s Dr. Vince Bertucci, medical director for Bertucci MedSpa. “A single product may not be enough for everyone.”

Anyone suffering through a multiple-step acne routine has wondered if a toner is necessary. “Toners are sometimes drying and need to be used with caution on sensitive skin,” advises Dr. Bertucci. “On the other hand, those with oily skin will appreciate their effects.” As for moisturizer, opt for one labelled “non-comodegenic.” Have a doctor assess acne that doesn’t respond to over-the-counter preparations, as you may need prescription antibiotics to control breakouts.

Bottom line An exfoliating cleanser and a toner will keep zits at bay, as well as a moisturizer that won’t clog pores.

Suggested arsenal Olay Blemish Control Lathering Cleanser (\$11, at drugstores), Spectro HydraCare Facial Moisturizer for Blemish-Prone Skin (\$15, at drugstores), Lancôme Tonique Radiance (\$34, at department stores).



MOISTURIZING

Key ingredients Humectants such as glycerin, urea, ammonium lactate; emollients such as jojoba oil, dimethicone, isopropyl myristate.

Canadians are exposed to harsh weather year-round—too cold, too windy, too dry—which, if you’re prone to dry skin, can make your complexion resemble a cracked, parched desert.

There is an overwhelming array of moisturizers at every price point on store shelves, so even if you’re on a budget, you’ll find something. However: “We’re not in such dire circumstances that we’re using Crisco,” Dr. Arlette jokes.

Of course, a day or night cream is only part of the equation for addressing parched skin. “You want a synthetic detergent, mild liquid cleanser with excellent rinsability,” advises Dr. Jang. “Removal of any soap residue is critical to prevent skin irritation and further drying.”

Bottom line Choose a gentle face wash and a moisturizer rich in humectants and emollients.

Suggested arsenal Mark Calming Effect Comforting Milk Cleanser (\$10, avon.ca), Origins Make A Difference Ultra-Rich Rejuvenating Cream (\$44, at select Bay stores) Skin By Monica Nighttime Moisturizer Plus (\$45, skinbymonica.com). □