



7 skincare products you should be using and 7 you shouldn't



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Finding the best products for your skin is easy if you know what you use, and also what not to use. I asked a variety of skincare experts including doctors, a nurse, and even a makeup artist what they think are the best ways to get your skin clear and glowing.

Their choices and knowledge may surprise you, but after shopping and cleaning out your bathroom, you'll discover younger, clearer, and healthier skin.

Use inexpensive face wash



Dr. Babak Dadvand, a double board-certified plastic surgeon in Beverly Hills, tells his patients (even the ones who don't need to be budget savvy) if they are plunking down a lot of cash for face wash, it's probably a better idea to save their money. Dr. Dadvand revealed to me, "It is not so much that expensive ones do not work well. It is that the ingredients in a face wash that are beneficial to the skin come in very basic, cheaper alternatives. The extra cost going into the expensive ones are paying for the packaging, brand name, and unnecessary ingredients."

So, when it comes to getting your face clean, skip the department store and just head on over to the drugstore. Dr. Dadvand's personal pick is Oil of Olay, but he agrees that whatever gets the job done is just fine.

Use sunscreen with the right active ingredients



Sunscreen is one of the most important skincare products we use, but not all are created equal. Dr. Dadvand says the first thing to look for when choosing one, is the SPF. "No sunscreen gives 100 percent protection from the sun. Sun Protection Factor means how much protection someone is getting from UVB rays, which are the rays that cause sunburn. SPF 15 typically gives 93 percent protection. SPF 50 gives 98 percent protection," he says.

He also suggests making sure your sunscreen is water-resistant, saying, "No sunscreen is 100 percent waterproof, but if it says 'water resistant' on the tube, it will maintain protective for one hour after swimming or extreme sweating."

If you're using sunscreen to prevent aging, Dr. Dadvand recommends finding a sunscreen with avobenzone, which is a "chemical that penetrates into the skin and helps absorb UVA rays. These are the rays that can accelerate skin aging."

But no matter what, make sure your sunscreen contains zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. Dr. Dadvand explained, "These chemicals lay on the skin and help reflect UVA rays as opposed to absorbing them. They are beneficial especially if someone has skin sensitivity to chemicals such as avobenzone and oxybenzone."

Use retinol-based products to treat acne



Retinol is kind of a miracle multi-tasking product. It helps treat both acne and aging in an incredibly effective way. One of the most potent retinol products is Retin-A, which is available by prescription only.

I asked Los Angeles-based internist, and owner of mobile med-spa Rejuvenation in Motion, Dr. Sal Nadkarni to explain how this drug works. "Retin-A works by speeding up the turnover rate of skin cells, which reduces the buildup of dead skin cells on pores to keep pores open, preventing pimple formation. Retin-A can also be used to lighten up dark spots from acne scarring, as well as work as an anti-aging treatment by smoothing fine lines and wrinkles."

If you are unable to obtain a prescription for Retin-A, don't worry. There are milder retinol products available everywhere from drugstores to department stores. You can also try Differin, which was formerly available by prescription only.

Use body care that multitasks



Using body care that multi-tasks is always a good idea. It's also important not to neglect any part of your body, including places we can sometimes forget about, such as your underarms. Miami-based Dove dermatologist Dr. Alicia Barba suggests using an antiperspirant that can also moisturize. "Never be exclusionary with your skin care routine. Even underarms need attention. Come summertime the skin will show, so you want it to look good there too! Look for a multi-benefit product like Dove Invisible Dry Spray Antiperspirant that provides odor and wetness protection as well as moisturizers to keep your underarms soft and silky smooth," she says.

Another good way to multi-task your skincare routine is to use a moisturizing after-sun product. This not only prolongs your tan, but it also restores your skin. An example of this is Bioderma Photoderm After Sun SOS. This spray refreshes your skin after a day in the sun and has a natural, fresh scent.

Use a calming serum



A serum is absolutely essential to any skincare routine. Nurse Nataly of iGlow Med Spa in Beverly Hills says, "I adore our 24/7 Skin Rescue serum. It is completely pure with a very strong potency. We have thirteen exotic oils in our serum, however the key ingredients that I really love and can tell that make a difference are kukui nut oil, which has amazing fatty acids that soothe skin irritations, argan oil which is high in vitamin E, and squalane, which is a highly effective emollient and a natural antioxidant."

The serum is formulated very specifically and is preservative-free, which is better for your skin. "There is a specific reason why other serums can actually harm your skin with preservatives like parabens and sulfates," Nataly says. "Very often serums with preservatives sit on the shelves for a very long time and this also weakens their potency. Additionally, many people are allergic to these preservatives so their skin ends up in a worse condition."

Use a silicone bristle cleansing brush



Silicone cleansing brushes can be a game changer in your skincare routine. One example of this kind of brush is the Luna by Foreo, which is an electronic cleansing device. I spoke to Sajel Shah, a former representative for the company. She shared the many reasons why we should all be using a Luna. "There are different models for different skin types as well as a variety of settings, and so you can truly customize this product." She also noted, "Extended battery life is a huge plus, so you do not have to worry while you are traveling." After all, it doesn't matter how good a cleansing brush if you can't use it. I've personally had my Luna 2 for several years and have charged it maybe five times.

It also feels really good on the skin. Shah explained to me, "The silicone brushes are super soft and fine. It also gives you a deep clean, especially in areas like the crevices around your nose. The medical grade silicone used to make the product is thirty-five times more hygienic than nylon bristle brushes. Silicone is also quick drying and antimicrobial. Because it is non-porous, it prevents any bacteria build-up."

Furthermore, the product is not disposable and doesn't require buying refills. So in the long term, you will have a clean face, but not a cleaned-out wallet.

Use primer before makeup



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If you want your makeup to look its best, it's ideal to start out with good skin. One of the best ways to keep your makeup on and staying fresh all day is to use a primer before you apply your foundation. I spoke to licensed makeup artist Bailey Eubanks, assistant manager at Blushington (Think DryBar, but for your face) in Woodland Hills, California. Eubanks always puts primer on her customers' faces before applying their makeup.

She told me, "Primer smoothes the skin and preps the skin for foundation to sit on top of it, whereas if you were just to go on top of bare skin or moisturized skin, it won't have the same longevity, especially in oily areas. Focus primers where you get oily or have blemishes, wherever there is texture. Even a little bit right in the t-zone. You can even just use it in select areas, like on your eyelids."

Don't use products for the wrong skin type



When it comes to skincare, remember that one size doesn't always fit all. A lot of times we want to try products that we hear about from friends, or read about, but what works well for another person might be wrong for you, and the results may not be quite what you were expecting.

Dr. Nadkarni suggests making sure the products you choose are correct for your skin type. He explained to me, "Typical skin type categories consist of normal, oily, dry, combination, and sensitive. Skincare products are developed to treat specific conditions based on your skin type. The consequence of using products for skin types other than yours can possibly lead to acne breakouts, overly dry skin, and severe skin irritation. So knowing your skin type is essential to determine which skin care products you should use."

If you are unsure if a product is formulated for your skin type, it's pretty easy to figure it out. The information should be right there on the label.

Don't use sunscreen with fragrance



Dr. Dadvand could not be a bigger proponent of sunscreen, but he doesn't recommend choosing any random product off the shelf. The first thing he suggests nixing is an overly perfumed product, saying, "Overly fragrant sunscreens can cause skin irritation and headaches and nausea. I would recommend steering clear."

He also suggests not sharing your sunscreen with your kids and instead getting them their own bottle. "If you have children, make sure the sunscreen is [labeled] 'kid friendly' and [does] not cause irritation. [Because] kids have the propensity to put their fingers in places they shouldn't, such as their mouths and eyes."

Dr. Dadvand also skips any bottle with too high an SPF because it's unnecessary. "With any sunscreen that has an SPF over 50, you do not end up getting any extra significant protection, [especially] for the money they cost."

Don't use benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid at the same time



It can feel like there's nothing worse than when your face breaks out. Even just a pimple or two can make you feel self-conscious. For many people, all you need to do is head over to the local drugstore or pharmacy, according to Dr. Nadkarni. "Numerous treatments exist for acne, but the most common are benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid. Benzoyl peroxide and salicylic acid are available over the counter. Both of these can treat mild to moderate acne...by preventing the formation of white heads and black heads." Even if you haven't heard of either one of these ingredients before, you have probably used products containing them.

While both of these products work, if you are really trying to get rid of a pimple, it's best not to go overboard. If you do, Dr. Nadkarni says, your pimple won't be the only red thing on your face. "Both of these products are very effective and have been mainstay acne treatments for decades. However, be cautious to not use both at the same time because it can cause excessive peeling, dryness, redness, and irritation. I suggest using benzoyl peroxide or salicylic acid during the day as spot treatments, and then use Retin-A before going to bed as an overnight treatment."

Don't use grey market or counterfeit products



Have you ever seen a serum you know is expensive, marked down to \$25 at an off-price store — and wondered why it was so cheap? That's because products sold at unauthorized retailers can potentially be gray market goods.

According to *Refinery29*, gray market products end up at these kinds of stores when legitimate distributors sell to collectors, who then divert products from their expected channels. On the surface, this might not sound like a problem. After all, who doesn't like a bargain? But, you have no idea where these products have been, what conditions they have been stored in and for how long they have been sitting in a warehouse.

Another issue is that bargain basement beauty products can potentially be counterfeit, which is even more dangerous. So, if you see a label that doesn't quite look right (such as Fendi perfume with two i's) or a price that looks way lower than it should be, you could potentially be causing severe harm to yourself. Counterfeit cosmetics can be very dangerous, according to the FBI, who report these items could be packing "arsenic, beryllium, and cadmium" as well as aluminum, and potentially, toxic amounts of bacteria. Not pretty.

Don't use a nylon bristle cleansing brush

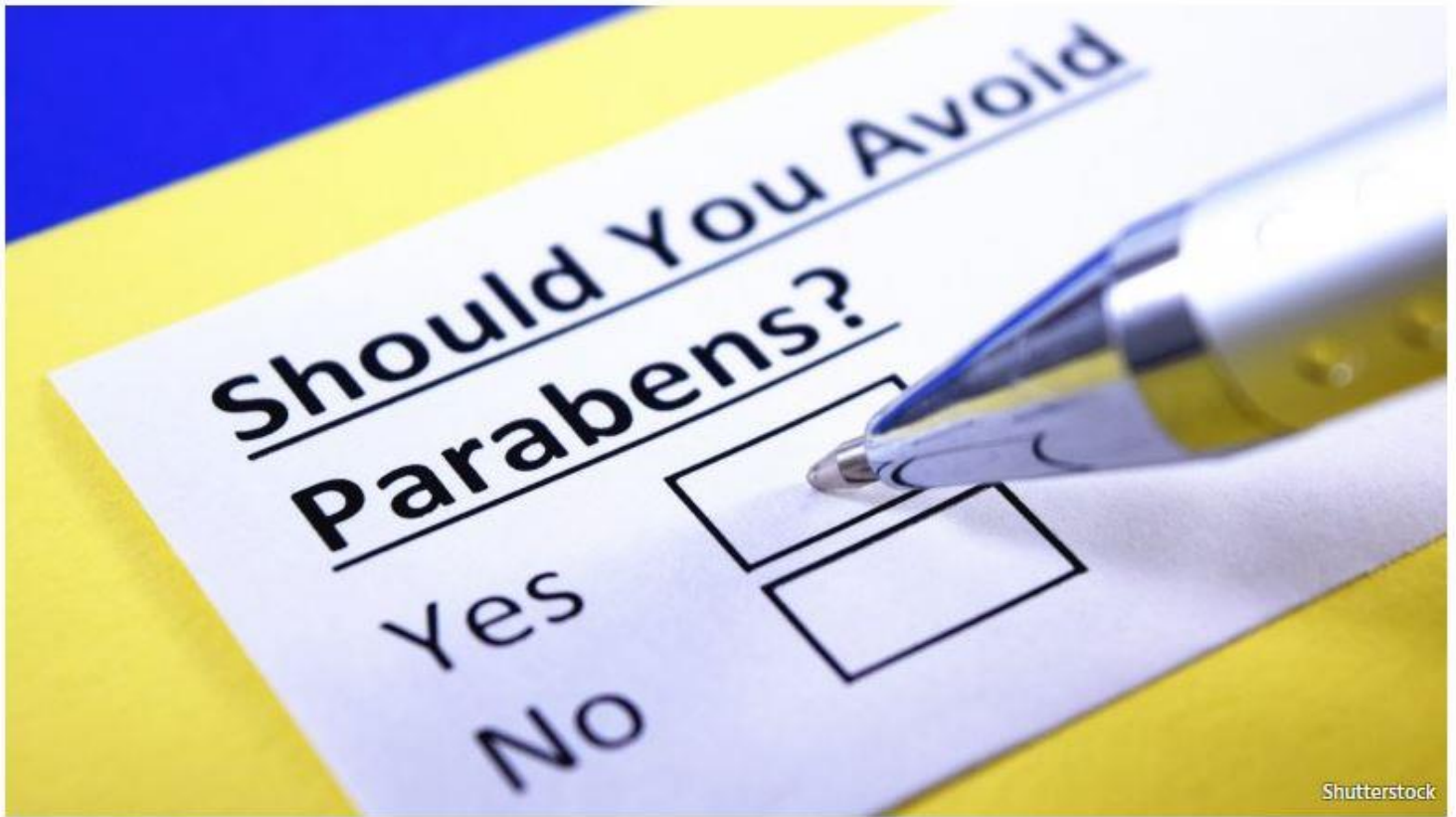


It feels as if nylon cleansing brushes are sold everywhere from the local drugstores to department stores and specialty stores such as Sephora. But that doesn't necessarily mean they are the best way to clean our faces.

In fact, according to Sajel Shah, they can actually do more harm than good. She says, "Nylon bristles are very harsh. You can wind up over-exfoliating and ultimately over-expose your skin to the sun if you aren't using the right SPF. While many people use brushes to prevent breakouts, nylon bristles can actually cause breakouts because it can introduce bacteria.

Then there is the refill factor. Nylon bristles don't last forever and need to frequently be replaced, which can be both expensive and inconvenient. Shah made an argument for not buying a product that must constantly be refilled, "In life, we have so many things to replace, whether it is filling our trash liners or changing our toothbrush heads. Why do you need another thing to worry about? It makes life less difficult."

Don't use products with parabens



Dr. Nadkarni also suggests avoiding products that contain parabens. Parabens are preservatives found in pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, skin care products, personal care products such as toothpaste and moisturizers, and even some foods.

He explained that the most common types are methylparaben, ethylparaben, propylparaben, and butylparaben. While they can be harmful, he says they do have a purpose. "Although parabens do allow a product to have a shelf life of months or even years due to their preservative effect, they can also pose dangers to your health. While each product may contain a safe amount of the preservative, the cumulative exposure of parabens from the use of numerous products that contain them may be overloading our bodies and possibly causing serious health risks. For example, parabens have been known to disrupt hormone function by mimicking estrogen, which in some cases has been shown to trigger breast cell division and growth of breast tumors," he shared.

So how do you avoid using products with parabens? While Dr. Nadkarni thinks eliminating them completely is very difficult because of the amount of products we use on a daily basis that can potentially contain them, his solution is simple. He says, "I would highly suggest reading product labels to limit your use of products that contain parabens. Also, many companies have produced preservative-free versions of their products as well, or have developed natural or organic alternatives to parabens."

You know yourself best



So how many of these products were you using, that you shouldn't have been? Or, were you using the right products at the wrong time?

Either way, it's important to understand that if something is working for you, it's probably a good idea to stick with it. After all, who knows your own skin better than you do?