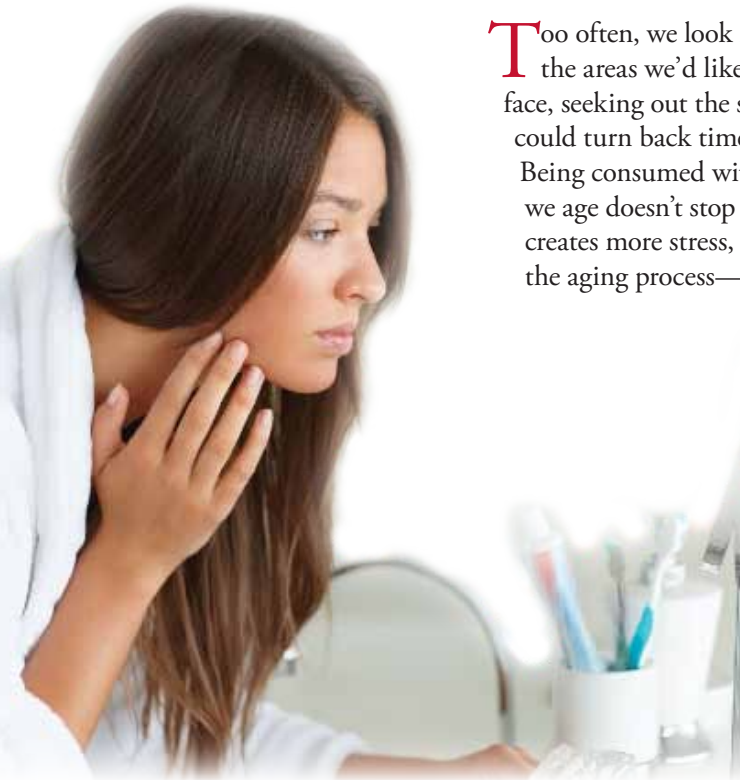


Love the Skin You Are In Now and Forever

By Michelle Nickens



Too often, we look in the mirror and focus on the areas we'd like to improve. We scan our face, seeking out the signs of aging, wishing we could turn back time or stop time altogether. Being consumed with what could happen as we age doesn't stop the process. Instead, it creates more stress, which, ironically, advances the aging process—a vicious cycle. But we

have the power to stop the cycle and improve and love the skin we are in, no matter what our age. At each stage of our lives, our skin transforms. Those transformations require care that ultimately helps our skin stay healthy, vibrant and young.

Genetics, skin type, sun exposure, gravity, environmental factors, smoking and age impact our skin. The National Institute of Aging reports that as you age, skin becomes thinner, less smooth and loses fat. Your skin becomes dryer, more fragile, and prone to injury, infection and bruises and takes longer to heal.

A number of experts and research sites stress that sun exposure is a major factor impacting our skin. Beginning in our 20s and continuing throughout our lives, staying out of the sun and taking appropriate precautions when we are in the sun can delay or even reduce the appearance of wrinkles, age spots and dryness. Using sunscreen, protective clothing and appropriate sunglasses can make a huge difference in our skin.

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Smoking and alcohol consumption also affect our skin. Smoking restricts oxygen to the outer layer of the skin, has a premature aging effect, and causes fine lines around the mouth. In addition, alcohol deprives skin of essential nutrients and may cause facial blood vessels to dilate, leading to red spider veins. Limiting sun exposure, stopping smoking, and drinking in moderation are steps we can take at any age to help our skin stay strong. But as we age, other factors come into play.

Dr. Mignon L. Emenike of The Wellness Center in Tallahassee explains that hormone decline begins when women are in their 30s. Effects of decreasing levels of estrogen and progesterone become visible in a woman's 40s and 50s. She says that estimates indicate that skin after menopause loses up to 30 percent of its collagen in the first five years. But again, there is still hope. Dr. Mignon says that there are some attainable anti-aging skin care therapies to combat the signs of aging skin. She also recommends nutritional

counseling and a good diet, consisting of fruits and vegetables and avoiding sugar, dairy, and processed or refined carbohydrates and fats. In addition, taking vitamins, minerals, and fatty acids that help skin maintain elasticity, increase cellular turnover, combat free-radical damage and regulate natural moisture factors will help as well. Developing these healthy habits and building a foundation early will help keep the momentum as you age.

Integrate a daily skin care routine that includes exfoliating two or three times a week, cleansing, moisturizing and sun protection. Use warm water instead of hot water to stop dry skin. Clean your cell phone and other items that come in contact with your skin. Manage stress and make time for yourself. Check your skin and report changes or things that worry you to your doctor. Drink water and stay hydrated. Appreciate and love the skin you are in, and make skin care a priority. 

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