

# Skin

## TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR COMPLEXION



**I**t is impressive that we humans frequently manage our lives by responding to crisis rather than trying to avoid crisis in the first place. In the arena of health this is evident by a reliance on suppressing the symptoms of disease rather than looking for underlying causes and preventing the disease process in the first place. Unhealthy habits will eventually be rewarded with health problems. Most of us will agree that it is miserable to be 'sick' and yet when we feel 'healthy' we are likely to take our health for granted. Given that some of us are blessed with 'good' DNA, it is still important to remember that our health habits have a profound effect upon our well being.

What is perplexing is why we don't change our behavior when we're educated and informed. With that in mind let's take a look at the most humble of organs – the skin.

As a Plastic Surgeon the skin has a special significance for me. People seek me and my fellow Plastic Surgeons out to manage their wrinkles, sagging skin and other skin deformities. Still, the skin doesn't get much respect. The brain, the heart, the liver, etc. definitely command much more respect. However the skin is an unsung hero. As the largest organ in the body it protects, helps regulate temperature and assists in the elimination of waste. It performs these duties silently and without many thanks from the people living inside.

What we do notice about our skin though is its appearance. Much poetry has been written extolling the beauty of the skin - its softness, its glow, its color. Lovely skin is admired in all cultures and is a symbol of beauty. Beautiful skin is also a gift of youth and many of us strive to maintain that gift as long as we can.

So if you wish to take care of your skin and not face a mid-life skin crisis here are the steps you should take, starting with what you can do on your own, to what a professional can offer you.

+ Avoid unnecessary sun exposure, do not burn and use an appropriate sunscreen. All sun exposure damages skin. However, much of the joy of life involves activities that take us outside. So 'use sun responsibly'.

+ Do not smoke! No matter what pleasure smoking gives, the fact remains that it is a systemic poison. It prema-

turely ages skin, damaging it and reducing oxygen transport to the tissues.

+ Limit alcohol intake. The liver is important in detoxifying the body and alcohol is definitely treated by the body as a toxin.

+ Get enough rest. Burning the candle at both ends causes stress and stress releases the hormones and chemicals that age us. The stress of chronic sleep deprivation causes premature aging of the skin.

However, if you find yourself looking at your sun burned face in the mirror at 3:00 a.m. in the bathroom of your favorite club after downing your 5th Martini and smoking the last of your cigarettes and you have an epiphany and decide to rescue what's left of your skin – don't give up hope. There are a number of very good things your doctor can do to help you out.

+ A good doctor prescribed skin care line can do wonders in improving skin color and complexion.

+ Lasers and skin tightening technologies can provide smoother, tighter and less wrinkled skin.

+ Various dermal fillers can restore lost volume and improve the lips, the hollows under the eyes and the folds that form between the nose and the lips. They can even be used to create a 'liquid' facelift.

+ Vitamins, minerals and other nutritional supplements taken internally or applied to the skin can reduce or sometimes reverse the ongoing aging that is occurring. Antioxidants such as vitamin C, Alpha Lipoic Acid, Vitamin A and a host of other compounds all can aid in restoring skin health.

+ Befriend an Aesthetician – Facials and light 'Peels' help keep the dead skin to a minimum and enhance the glow of healthy skin.

All said, each individual will make the decisions that affect his or her skin health. It may take lung cancer or liver cirrhosis to motivate someone to quit smoking or drinking. It may take skin cancer to persuade another to reduce sun exposure. However, for those of us with an eye towards enjoying a long and healthy life, we would be well advised to adopt the behaviors that will leave us not only with healthy and attractive skin as we age, but with a sound mind and strong body.

*DR JON F HARRELL DO FACS Dr. Harrell is a Board Certified Plastic Surgeon. He serves as Medical Director of The Century Center for Aesthetic Medicine and Surgery in Weston, FL. 2133 N. Commerce Pkwy Weston, FL 33326 | 954.384.9692 | www.DrJonHarrell.com*