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Stagnant skin

Natasha Hughes
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This winter I seem to be turning into my mother-in-law. I'm doing a lot of sitting with a little cushion behind my back. I'm taking naps after lunch in my clothes. And I'm cranking up the heating so that whenever anyone comes to the house they say, "Goodness, it's warm in here!" and peel off several layers, while I say, "Do you think so?" and keep sitting in my light-knit jersey. My waist is thickening, my back is aching but, most of all, my skin is drying. Yes - I'm stagnant!

Stagnant skin is a winter malady. In fact, I should have recognised the symptoms in autumn and made my plans. My normal routine could have been replaced with something more nourishing, with water-boosting properties. "You've got to amp it up a bit in winter, even if it's just at night," says Mecca Cosmetics's skin specialist, Jasmine Smith. "The biggest problem is dehydration. We're not drinking enough, not eating as well - more carbs, less fruit - and we're living in central heating then going out into the extreme cold. In the same way you change your clothes to something more comfortable, you've got to change your skin routine. It's winter for a long time in Melbourne."

Even oily skin can become dehydrated: dehydrated skin lacks water, not oil. Hyaluronic acid helps skin hold water and is best delivered in serum rather than moisturiser form, says Smith, "because often people are attached to their moisturisers but are happy to add a hydrating serum". She recommends Prescriptives' Super Line Preventer Extreme (\$138), which was launched last week. "It also doubles as a primer."

Loredana Faraina, of the Advanced Association of Beauty Therapists, says serums should be used under a moisturiser in winter for young as well as mature skin types. "Moisturise as much as possible. Winter products need to be slightly richer to maintain skin's hydration level." Some good creams include Lancome Primordial Optimum (\$125), Chanel Precision Hydramax (\$121), La Clinica Soothing Balm (\$35) and Eleusian Regenerative Hydrating Cream (\$52).

But Sydney plastic surgeon Warwick Nettle says moisturising can cause dry skin. "Environmental factors like heaters and the cold wind are minor causes," he says. "The main causes are hormonal imbalances - mature women with lower oestrogen levels can have dry skin - and, paradoxically, over-moisturising."

"Moisturisers help the outer cells to stay intact and send a message to the fresh new cells deep down to take their time to come to the surface. When the outer cells shed, the younger, plumper ones come to the surface. So the solution is to strip and nourish."

Dr Nettle says the best products for dry skin are those with vitamins A and C. He also says winter is a good time for glycolic peels and microdermabrasion. If you're not stagnant, that is.



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