

## BEAUTY LIES

By Helen Hawkes

We'd all love to believe that we could get rid of cellulite, shrink pores and banish wrinkles. But can we really do any of these things? Or are they simply beauty lies? We look at those beauty fibs we've all heard and sort the facts from the fiction.

Skin "eats and drinks".

"If skin kept hydrating, we'd drown in the bath," says celebrity beautician Sylvia Deitch, of Sydney's Double Bay. So there's no truth then to the idea that drinking lots of lots of water will give you a plumped up, teenage glow? Uh, no. "The best way to give skin a drink is to make sure you keep up your water intake and apply a moisturiser and barrier cream such as a sunblock," says Deitch.

A \$200 face cream is better than a \$50 one.

Well, it may be. But only if it has more expensive ingredients, says Deitch. "A lot of the time you are merely paying for the advertising and the packaging." Make sure your dollar is buying the face cream, not the multi-million ad campaign and attractive box, unless you like the box, of course.

Lipstick contains lead

Not the last time we checked. But that doesn't mean it doesn't contain other unsavoury ingredients. Kevin Farrow, author of *Skin Deep*, a guide to safe, chemical-free skincare and cleaning products (Lothian Books), says many lipsticks contain coal tar dyes which are potentially carcinogenic. They also contain artificial flavours and other ingredients you may not want to ingest. Of course if this bothers you, given that you eat about 4kg of lipstick in a lifetime, choose an organic brand like Dr Haushka or Mi Essence.

You can shrink pores.

You can not, no matter what the person selling you the product promises you. You can, however, make them look smaller.

"Pores are often maximised when skin loses its elasticity," says Eranthi Bonney, of Spa Samsara in Brighton, Victoria.

"People with oily skin also tend to have larger pores, as do people in warmer climates."

Using an exfoliating product, to slough off dead skin cells that have built up on the pore, will give them a reduced appearance, she says.

Be warned that picking and squeezing your pores can also stretch and scar them. So, if you are prone to clogged pores, use a salicylic acid-based product to keep them clean on the surface instead.

Soap is bad for your skin

The stuff your mum used might have been. Traditional soaps – a mix of animal fats and fruit/vegetable oils – tend to wash out the natural skin oils. But newer moisturising bars and liquids tend to be gentler and kinder to the skin, says Dr Tanya Gilmour, a dermatologist at North Shore Dermatology & Specialist Skin Cancer Centre in Manly. Some soaps even have emollients (moisturisers) added, so they are good for the skin, she says. So, go ahead. Use soap if you prefer that squeaky clean feeling, but choose one made for skin, not one made for deodorising.

Botox can kill you

If it could, half of Hollywood would be dead. Botox does contain botulinum toxin but it is purified and diluted and thousands of times weaker than a lethal dose.

You can get rid of cellulite.

If only. The truth is, nothing can be done to permanently eliminate it, no matter what the cream/gel/spray claims. "Cellulite is the combination of normal fat deposition and fibrous bands that connect deeper structures to the skin," explains Gilmour. "When the amount of fat increases the fat bulges between the fibrous bands resulting in the dimpling of the skin that is referred to as cellulite." Cellulite may be minimised by improving muscular definition in specific areas. Or try using a self-tanner as camouflage. Dry skin brushing pre-shower or bath may also help improve circulation to the area so your body can get rid of trapped fat naturally.

You don't need to use a cleanser on your skin if you don't wear make-up. Cleaning your skin isn't only to remove make-up but to remove dirt, dust, grime and sweat, says Caroline Nelson, Owner Javana Spa, Gold Coast.

Skin can never be too clean

Don't take the war on grime too seriously or chances are you'll be removing the natural skin oils. This will leave your skin dry, irritable, itchy and even prone to dermatitis. Cleansing gently once to twice a day is more than enough. And, while we're at it – that black "dirt" that you get on the cotton wool ball is more likely to be a mixture of dirt and exfoliated skin cells rather than pure filth. So relax!

Stroking skin upward will counteract gravity

Gravity is the reason that half of Hollywood goes in for a nip and tuck. Sadly, gravity is more powerful than your fingertips. So as you spend more time on the planet, it's either plastic surgery, or learn to love your slightly drooping look.

Never squeeze a pimple

"If there is pus on the skin, you should gently warm the area and remove it gently using soft pressure from your fingers and a tissue," says Deitch. You should never squeeze a blind pimple though. In other words, anything that doesn't pop readily should be left alone.

If it says "natural", it only contains natural, pure ingredients that are good for your skin

Read the label carefully, suggests Bonney. Many products that claim to be natural are actually full of ingredients like preservatives that aren't natural and you may wish to avoid, she says.

A split end can be repaired

This is true only if you're willing to snip the hair beyond the point of the split, says stylish John Pulitano, of Sydney's headcase hair. To avoid split ends, he recommends frequent trims and avoiding overly harsh chemical processing, styling or just plain over washing.

Dry skin causes wrinkles.

Dry skin just accentuates them, says Nelson. The facts are, most of wrinkles you see in the mirror are caused by the sun. The other 20 percent are the result of facial expressions such as smiling and frowning. If you smoke, the appearance of these wrinkles are accelerated. Of course if the hydrating cream you are having amnesia



about is your sunblock, you will be doing permanent damage. Wearing a suncream with a protection factor of at least SPF15 is the best way you can prevent ageing.

A little bit of sunshine is good for your skin  
Tell that to the baby smooth, sunspot-free skin on your bum.

If you keep having Botox, eventually you won't need it  
Many cosmetic surgeons will tell you that if you keep your injections up, the muscle that makes you frown, or squint, will eventually "give up". "The muscle does become more relaxed and perhaps weakened," says Frank Vella, of the Mediskin Clinic in Terrigal, NSW. "But having Botox is more of a behavioural modification – it retrains you not to use those muscles. If you have five, six, or more treatments, you may find that you are stretching out the normal time Botox lasts of around four months. But you will still need top up treatments."

Applying cocoa butter-or olive oil-will stop stretch marks  
Apparently Elle Macpherson used cocoa butter during her pregnancy and she looks fabulous doesn't she? Unfortunately stretch marks occur when skin expands quickly, breaking the collagen and elastin fibers that normally support it. Genetics may also play a part.

Smoking gives you lip lines  
Another one to blame your mother – or father – for. "Liplines are hereditary," says Deitch. "Smoking simply makes them worse."

Foods such as chocolates, lollies and chips cause acne  
Extensive studies show no evidence that specific foods cause acne, says Gilmour. That said, a good, well-balanced diet is beneficial both to your health and skin, she says. Make sure you include plenty of fish, for its anti-inflammatory, anti-ageing qualities, and lots of fresh fruit and vegetables and see your skin glow.

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