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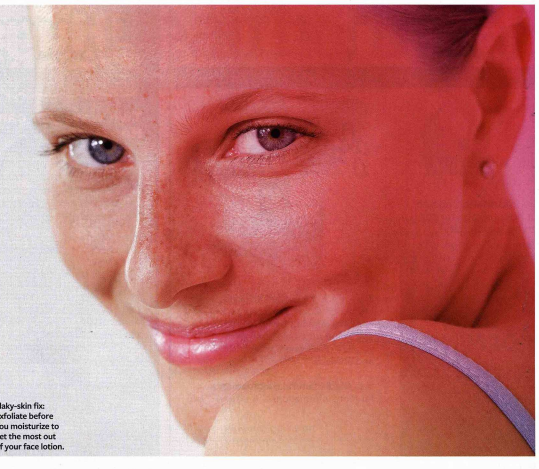


Flaky-skin fix: Exfoliate before you moisturize to get the most out of your face lotion.

Test Your Skin Smarts

What's the best way to tame a breakout? Erase fine lines around your eyes? Find out with this healthy-beauty quiz. By *Jennifer Goldstein*

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU SLATHERED ON A CREAM OR squeezed a blemish without knowing if your solution will help—or do harm? "Patients often show up in my office after they've tried to solve a skin issue but ended up making it worse," says Debra Jaliman, MD, a dermatologist in New York City. Find out how skin-savvy you are with this quiz—then discover the best ways to keep your complexion smooth, beautiful, and problem-free.

1. If my complexion suddenly looks flaky, I ...

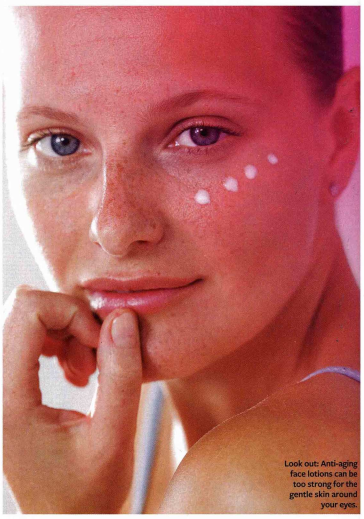
A. gently exfoliate each day and apply moisturizer.
B. use a scrub with natural exfoliants, like ground walnut shells or salt.
C. immediately head to the dermatologist to see what's up.
D. apply a rich face cream.

ANSWER: A Flakiness that comes on suddenly is often a reaction to a product or a symptom of dry skin. (Chronic flakiness, on the other hand, could be caused by a condition such as seborrheic dermatitis that may require a trip to the doc, says dermatologist Paul Friedman, MD, co-author of *Beautiful Skin Revealed: The Ultimate Guide to Better Skin.*) So, what to do for flakes that appear out of nowhere? First, stop using any new products to rule them out as the cause. If the flakiness persists, gently exfoliate every morning then apply a moisturizer. "Moisturizer alone can't penetrate the layer of flaky skin effectively," Dr. Jaliman explains. "But you don't want to use rough scrubs with shells or granules." She suggests removing flakes with a gentle manual exfoliator, like the **Neutrogena Wave Sonic Power Cleanser** ($9; neutrogena.com). Afterward, apply a lotion with moisturizing hyaluronic acid to heal dry skin. Or just break open a capsule of hyaluronic acid, like **Philosophy When Hope Is Not Enough Replenishing Hyaluronic Acid/Peptide Capsules** ($50; Sephora), and add the contents to a dollop of your regular moisturizer before you apply it.

2. When my face has red patches, my first move is to ...

A. use an anti-redness lotion, then hide the discoloration with concealer.
B. try an anti-aging moisturizer with broad-spectrum chemical sunscreen.
C. apply a mineral sunblock and an anti-redness treatment.
D. treat it like a rash and apply some hydrocortisone cream.

ANSWER: C Whether the redness is caused by dry or irritated skin or is simply a sign of aging, UV light can exacerbate things. For that reason, the right strategy incorporates sun protection. Dr. Jaliman suggests applying an SPF lotion with zinc oxide (they're often called mineral sunblocks) each morning. "Zinc has anti-inflammatory properties that can calm redness, and it's typically less irritating than chemical sunscreens," she says. Try **Avalon Organics Essential Lift Firming Moisturizer SPF 15** ($20; CVS). Sometimes, that will be enough to fix the flush, but applying an anti-redness treatment, such as **Clinique Redness Solutions Urgent Relief Cream** ($30; clinique.com), before bed is also a good idea. If the redness doesn't go away after a few weeks, have your doctor take a look. "It could be rosacea or another chronic condition that a dermatologist will be able to diagnose and treat," Dr. Friedman notes.



Look out: Anti-aging face lotions can be too strong for the gentle skin around your eyes.

3. When I have a pimple, I ...

A. use my fingertips to gently pop it, then put on some zit cream.
B. wash with an anti-acne cleanser, swab it with toner, then use a spot treatment.
C. dot on a blemish treatment.
D. dab on some toothpaste to dry it out.

ANSWER: C The urge to pop is undeniable, but putting your fingers anywhere near a pimple introduces bacteria that can cause an infection, Dr. Jaliman says. Instead, wash with your regular cleanser, then dot on a treatment with salicylic acid, like **Kiehl's Blue Herbal Spot Treatment** ($16; kiehls.com) or **Nature's Gate Natural Results Spot Corrector** ($10; natures-gate.com). The last thing you want to do is go overboard with tons of products; switching to a face wash with anti-acne ingredients, then layering on anti-acne products your skin's not used to may cause irritation that slows healing time. That said, there are rare cases when popping is OK, if done correctly—but you should never use your fingers. "If it's truly a whitehead, not a red, cyst-like bump, apply a warm compress for a few minutes, use the tips of two dry cotton swabs to gently squeeze it, then wash your face," Dr. Jaliman advises.

4. To treat scaly spots on my body, I ...

A. apply cocoa butter to soften them.
B. exfoliate with a loofah in the shower, then apply body lotion.
C. wash with a moisturizing soap, then apply body cream.
D. wash with a mesh sponge and fragrance-free body wash in the shower, then apply body lotion.

ANSWER: D Scaly patches could be caused by dryness or, if they're bumpy like chicken skin, they could be keratosis pilaris, a condition that occurs when proteins in your skin plug up hair follicles. Either way, you need to exfoliate and hydrate—just hydrating with a rich body cream won't work because the cream won't be able to penetrate the barrier of dead skin. "Just cleanse by massaging on your body wash with a nylon mesh sponge, which gently exfoliates," Dr. Jaliman says; try the **EcoTools EcoPouf Bath Sponge** ($2; Target). You may want to use a body wash formulated for sensitive skin, like **Dove Sensitive Skin Body Wash with NutriumMoisture** ($7; drugstores), because it causes less irritation. After showering, while your skin is damp, apply a lotion with an alpha hydroxy acid, which has exfoliating and moisturizing properties that will help smooth the rough skin. Our pick: **Thymes Red Cherie AHA Body Cream** ($29; thymes.com).

5. To soften wrinkles around my eyes, I ...

A. use an eye cream with antioxidants.
B. apply an eye cream with retinol and a sunscreen.
C. reach for a face lotion with retinol.
D. wash with anti-aging cleanser and use an anti-aging toner and serum, retinol face cream, and sunscreen.

ANSWER: B Antioxidants are great, but their main function is to *prevent* new sun damage from forming, rather than soften the lines you already have. Retinol, on the other hand, "can help to stimulate the growth of collagen," which plumps up skin, making lines less noticeable, Dr. Friedman explains. He suggests using an eye cream with retinol—bonus points if yo also has protective antioxidants like **Dermalogica Age Reversal Complex** ($75; dermalogica.com then smooth on sunscreen daily. Anything more might be overki explains: Layering on too many a aging products or using retinol o meant for your face can irritate thin skin around your eyes. Ins opt for the one product designe do the job—and do it gently.