

Facial Fitness

We can all be beautiful;
some of us just don't know it, yet

By Julie Gerber, M.Ed., Licensed Nutrition Counselor



Looking our best is an important goal for everyone, whether a young career woman, an elderly, retired gentleman, or a teenager with acne. Age, gender, or occupation does not prevent us from wanting to appear attractive. We can all be beautiful; some of us just don't know it, yet. In order to achieve good looks, what we need is a beauty plan.



Your beauty needs may be different from one another. Some of you may be having problems with your skin, others may want to lose weight, and many may feel it's totally hopeless to look better. Yet, I am here to tell you that it is possible to improve your appearance. No matter how you look right now, you will begin to look better by following the simple guidelines in my beauty-fitness plan. And, you can keep improving a little bit every day, just like when working out.

First, let's think about how you've been taking care of your face. A good program for beautiful, healthy looking skin consists of cleansing, exfoliating, and moisturizing. Everyone can follow this program, men and women, those with dry skin as well as with oily skin, teens with acne and those with porcelain complexions. In short, no one is

excused from taking care of your skin. We all brush our teeth daily, don't we? It's essential to take care of your face every day much the same way you brush your teeth every day. Here are six steps for taking care of your skin properly. I first became aware of the importance of protecting my face when my husband, Richie and I bought the Bread of Life back in 1980, a tiny health food store in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Until then, I was using just soap to wash my face and did not know how to moisturize, and I wore lots of eye make up. One day, into the store comes a cosmetic company sales representative who wanted to introduce her line of skin care products. As she trained me to sell these wonderful products, I learned how to take care of my skin and have been since then. I am still learning new tricks.

Choose natural products

It is best to look for products that are natural, free of harmful, harsh chemicals. Avoid products containing dangerous preservatives such as sodium laureth sulfate, and parabens. Get in the habit of reading labels and purchasing those containing organic ingredients, pure botanicals, and essential oils instead of synthetic fragrances.

Step One: Removal

Your facial workout begins with removing make up, if you wear it, of course. Use a natural remover and gently to take off eye make up, foundation, and lipstick. Now you are ready to cleanse your face. It is best to avoid soap when cleansing your face. Usually, soaps are not pH balanced. A natural acid mantle, an invisible film that protects us from bacteria and pollutants, protects skin. When we apply creams to our face, we want to make sure we are not destroying this acid mantle. If we use a slightly alkaline product, such as soaps, it takes time for the skin to return to its slightly acidic stage, especially as we age. You can prevent many skin problems by making sure you are using products that are pH balanced.

Step Two: Cleanse

A good cleanser is easy to use. There are creams and liquid cleansers. Some people like to cleanse their face by applying creams to a facial towel or cotton pad, then massaging it on the face. I use a liquid cleanser to clean my face quickly in the morning and in the evening. I begin by wetting my face, pouring a bit of the cleanser into my hands, and then gently massaging it all over my face, followed by rinsing. At this point, my face feels especially clean.

Step Three: Exfoliate

The next step is exfoliating, a deeper cleansing procedure. Exfoliating does not have to be done every day

unless you have an oily condition. In order to understand why exfoliating is important, you need to understand the way the skin works. The outer skin, the epidermis sheds all the time. Consisting of about 30 layers, the epidermis sheds about one layer of skin each day. As this happens, new, healthy layers are being formed. When we exfoliate, we help get rid of old layers, and we stimulate the skin to produce new, young looking layers.

There are many ways to exfoliate your skin. You can use scrubs, masks, or gentle peels. Exfoliating tightens the skin, removes dead cells, unclogs pores, removes impurities, and rids it of excess oil. All skin types benefit from this process. Usually, exfoliating scrubs have ground up grains and nuts that scrub the skin's surface. Exfoliate at least once a week.

Steam Away

When you have the time in your busy schedule to indulge in a relaxing beauty exercise, give yourself a facial steam. Get ready for a very pleasant experience. Heat water in a big pot and add your favorite aromatic herb such as lavender, chamomile, rose petals, or calendula flowers. While standing over the steaming water,

drape a towel over your head, and allow the steam to rise to your face. If it gets too hot, take off the towel and rest for a few minutes. Repeat the process. The aromatic steam will penetrate and cleanse your pores while restoring and rejuvenating skin vitality.

Mask Away

Another truly awesome cleansing step involves a facial mask. I have always loved French green clay for this procedure. When our son was a young teenager and had acne issues, we routinely applied masks to our faces as a family event once a week. Picture the three of us with green faces as the green clay dried and not being able to laugh at each other (because as the clay dried, it made our faces so stiff, we couldn't even move our lips) even though it was a hilarious sight!! I wish I had taken photos at the time.

Green Clay absorbs impurities right out of your skin. It tones by stimulating fresh blood to go right into the skin cells, thus improving circulation. It's an amazing substance. You can purchase the powder and make your own poultice by adding water in a bowl, or you can find many prepared clay mask products in the market place.

DID YOU KNOW?

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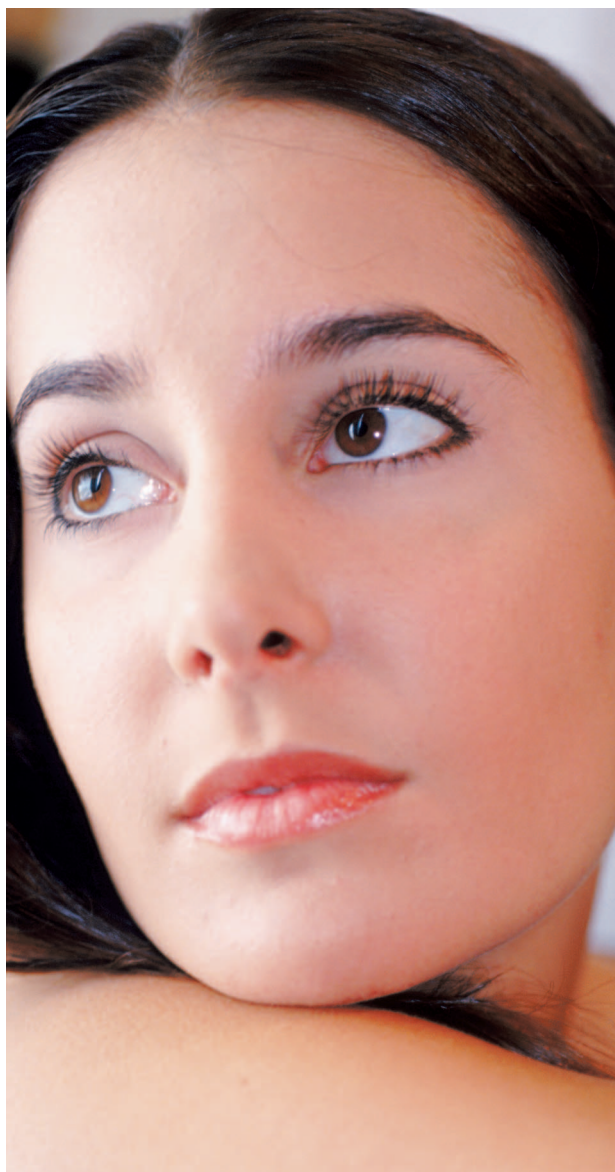
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It takes about 20 minutes for the clay to do its job. Removing it takes a bit of work, though. It helps to use a wet wash towel. I recommend the use of a moisturizer after a clay treatment, but I am getting ahead of myself.

Step Four: Tone

After cleansing, using a toner helps the skin to tighten up the opened pores. Toners must be pH balanced. Just splash the toner on your face or spread it on the skin with a cotton pad. Toners make great aftershave lotions for men, too.

Step Five: Moisturize

Now you are ready to use a moisturizer, another essential step. Be sure to select a natural product, and always moisturize your face and neck. This goes for guys and gals. When you moisturize your face, you are directly feeding it nutrients. I like using a day cream and a separate night cream. In this way, I feed my face a diverse diet. I always use a separate eye cream for that tender area under the eye. Apply it gently.

My beauty plan requires that you cleanse, tone, and moisturize twice a day: once in the morning when you wake up and in the evening before bed. It is crucial to have a clean, moisturized face while you sleep. Because there is so much healing going on during sleep, your face will be better prepared for rejuvenation.

Step Six: Protect

I must confess that I was not as careful as I should have been when it came to sun exposure. Since I was a young child, I have always been a sun worshipper. I love to be out in the sun. It just makes me feel so good, and I tan very quickly – a look I really love. I was always careful and used lots of sunscreen. Alas, all that sunlight has damaged my skin as evidenced by brown spots on my face and my arms. If I were to do it all over again, I would certainly decrease my time in the sun.

However, a bit of sunlight is good. Direct sunlight produces necessary vitamin D for our skin. Try to stay out of the sun during the middle of the day, though. If you do burn, apply lotions containing Aloe Vera. Remember to wear sunglasses and protect your skin by using sun block on your face, hands, and arms.

A final suggestion for your beauty fitness plan has to do with taking care of your lips. Because there are no oil glands on the lips, they can become dry and cracked easily. Use a lip balm as often as you can to keep your kisser moist. I like to use lip balm before applying lipstick, which then goes on very smoothly, and my lips do not dry out.

I hope you have learned some good beauty tips and feel encouraged to follow your own beauty plan.

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