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10 YEARS

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“YOUR HANDS ARE EXPOSED TO THE AIR AND THE ELEMENTS AND THE DEGREE OF DEHYDRATION IS MORE ACUTE. THAT’S WHY MOISTURIZERS ARE MORE IMPORTANT FOR THE HANDS THAN THEY ARE FOR OTHER PARTS OF THE BODY.”

DR. WEKSBERG
MD, FRCPC

APPLAUDING another’s success, wiping away tears of joy and sadness, holding our loved ones close—our hands guide us through everything we do. They nurture, they caress, they get the job done. And as we get older, they do, too.

“What you see on aging hands is the natural loss of fat and the thinning of the skin, so you start to see all the tendons and veins,” explains Dr. Fred Weksberg, MD, FRCPC, FACP, of the Weksberg Centre for Cosmetic Dermatology in Toronto. “And we’re always working with our hands, so they’re going to be exposed to sun, soaps and chemicals. These also take their toll on the skin’s surface.”

Here’s how to prevent and treat the signs of aging hands:

Hands need sunscreen, too

“THE FIRST THING people need to do is avoid sun exposure or use sunscreen on the back of the hands,” says Dr. Colin Hong, MD, FRCSC, FACP, a plastic and reconstructive surgeon in Toronto. This is a popular sentiment, as all the professionals we spoke to agree that sun exposure is the leading cause of accelerated aging of the hands, or any part of the body.

Damaging UVA and UVB rays lead to excess pigmentation and dehydration, which can promote age spots and wrinkling. While most people take steps to protect their skin with sunscreen, the hands are usually overlooked. “Often what happens after you apply sunscreen is that you tend to wash your hands because the sunscreen is greasy or sticky,” adds Dr. Paul Cohen, MD, FRCPC, DABD, of the Rosedale Dermatology Centre in Toronto. Resist the urge to wash and, instead, massage the excess sunscreen into the backs of your hands.

Moisture is a must

“YOUR HANDS are exposed to the air and the elements, so the degree of dehydration is more acute. That’s why moisturizers are more important for the hands than they are for other parts of the body,” says Dr. Weksberg.

Repetition is what gets our hands into trouble—repeated washing, drying, exposure, sanitizing—but reducing any of these activities is next to impossible, so add repeated applications of moisturizer to the mix.

Hand moisturizers are typically stronger, thicker formulas designed to better absorb and keep in place. To rehydrate the hands, Dr. Weksberg recommends using products with these ingredients:

UREA A chemical compound the body produces naturally. It helps the skin attract and absorb moisture.

PETROLATUM A substance similar to petroleum jelly that coats the hands to protect them and repel water. “Water can hydrate hands, but it can also dehydrate the

hands when the water evaporates. That’s how it dries out the skin,” explains Dr. Weksberg. To get the most out of each moisturizer application, apply it to your hands when they are slightly damp.

In some cases, your dermatologist may prescribe a hand cream that contains hydrocortisone to help reduce inflammation and irritation in severely dry hands.

Anti-aging formulas

TO HELP FIGHT the signs of aging on the hands, Dr. Cohen suggests looking no further than your current beauty regime. Wrinkles are wrinkles, no matter where they appear. “Using a wrinkle cream will help treat the skin on the hands like it does on your face,” says Dr. Cohen. “But it’s important to remember that some anti-aging ingredients, like retinol, can be drying.”

Dr. Weksberg suggests using a moisturizer with a gentle alpha hydroxy acid such as lactic acid, which will help to exfoliate the skin and encourage collagen production.

Whatever you decide to use, be sure to keep some in your purse, at your desk, in your car, wherever your hands are—and use it often.

Treatments and procedures

SKIN, BONES, ligaments, tendons and veins—there’s a lot going on at the back of your hands. Genetics also play a large role in how your hands age. Fortunately there are treatments and procedures that can help diminish the signs of aging.

PARAFFIN WAX Used as both a moisturizing and pain-reducing treatment, the hands are moisturized and then covered with layers of wax, which intensely hydrates the skin as the moisture only has one place to go—into the skin. Performed in salons and spas. Prices range from \$15 to \$40 per treatment.

MESOTHERAPY This naturopathic treatment involves micro-injections of homeopathic remedies into the back of the hands. “Mesotherapy increases the production of collagen and elastin, and also improves the circulation in the hands,” explains Dr. Stacey Shillington, a naturopathic doctor at the Rosedale Dermatology Clinic. “You get firmer, younger-looking skin and a beautiful skin tone.” Most patients require a series of eight to 12 15-minute treatments. A maintenance treatment is needed every three to four months. Price: \$75 per treatment. Note: If a patient has extended health-care benefits for naturopathic medicine through his or her insurance provider, treatments are often covered.

MICRODERMABRASION AND CHEMICAL PEELS “Nothing gives away your age more than a young

face with old hands," says Dr. Cohen, who recommends that patients get the most out of their procedures by having them performed on both the face and the hands. Microdermabrasion and chemical peels smooth the surface of the skin. Dr. Cohen warns that these treatments can be drying, so he recommends being more diligent about moisturizing the hands afterward. Always speak to your skin-care professional before any treatment. Prices per treatment range from \$100 to \$150 for hands only and \$250 to \$300 for both face and hands.

LASER TREATMENTS Intense pulsed light (IPL) treatments can be used to target age spots, brighten skin tone and help to lessen the appearance of small veins, while a more intense Fraxel treatment can also help smooth the texture of the skin on the hands. For IPL, five treatments provide the best results. Price: \$300 per treatment. For Fraxel, five to six treatments provide the best results. Price: \$800 per treatment.

LIQUID NITROGEN This procedure is ideal for isolated age spots. "A quick spray of liquid nitrogen will cause the spot to scab over and eventually peel off, usually leaving no mark underneath," explains Dr. Weksberg. Performed by a dermatologist. Prices range from \$100 to \$200.

FILLERS Fillers, such as Juvéderm, Sculptra or Radiesse, are injected into the back of the hands. "It goes



Consonant Organic Hand Cream, (\$20, at Kirsh Cosmetic Studio, Pistachio and consonantbody.com)

Stri-Vectin-HC Ultra-Concentrate Cream For the Hands, (\$49, sears.ca)

Yves Rocher Riche Crème Anti-Wrinkle High Nutrition Hand Cream (\$17, yves-rocher.com)

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MAY: Clinesthetics will be giving away 40 Units of botox and a package of 4 microderma-brasions with peptide infusion therapy.

JUNE: Anti-Aging Laser and Wellness will be giving away \$1000 worth of services (Excludes: Botox, Fillers and massage).

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ENHANCE LASER GUIDE

GENTLE SUCTION TO THE SKIN ENABLES THE LASER INTENSITY TO BE LOWERED WHILE STILL ACHIEVING A HIGH LEVEL OF HAIR REDUCTION—WITH NO PAIN AND INCREASED SPEED.

LIGHT SHEER DUET LASER HAIR REMOVAL SYSTEM

Toronto, uses the ReFirme laser for skin tightening. "It penetrates the first layer of the skin and causes the collagen to 'crunch' meaning it will become more concentrated and the skin will then be stimulated to produce more collagen." With this increase in collagen, skin becomes firmer and more elastic; there is no pain or downtime associated with this procedure. "I will do one side of a patient's face, and then show them with a mirror—they are always surprised to see an immediate difference." Dr. Madison recommends a cycle of five to seven ReFirme treatments for optimum toning and firming results, approximately every two weeks. Each treatment costs approximately \$300.

For hair removal

Dr. Fred Weksberg, MD, FRCPC, in Toronto uses the LightSheer Duet laser hair-removal system to provide superior results. The machine applies gentle suction to the skin, which enables the laser intensity to be lowered while still achieving a high level of hair reduction—with no pain and increased speed of treatment. It can be used for all areas, including face, arms, legs and torso.

"The ideal patient is someone who has hairs which are pigmented brown or black, with skin that is lighter in colour," says Dr. Weksberg. The number of treatments needed varies from patient to patient. An average number of sessions is five to six. "The improvement lasts for years. While there is minimal downtime, it is normal to experience some redness and swelling around the hair follicle—this is, in fact, a desired clinical result." After-care instructions include handling the skin gently for the first 24 hours after treatment. "We recommend using SwissTEC Soothing Gel to help alleviate any redness or swelling you may have post treatment." It's also important to avoid the sun for one month prior to and one month following the laser hair removal treatment. After the one-month period, sun protection is a must, with a minimum SPF of 30 recommended by Dr. Weksberg. LightSheer Duet treatment prices depend on the size of the area; an upper lip is \$150 per treatment while a full back is about \$700 per treatment.

For the eyes

Dr. Sheldon Herzig, MD, FRCSC, of the Herzig Eye Institute in Toronto is a laser eye surgery pioneer. "Lasik is by far our most popular laser eye surgery," he says. For this procedure, a laser delivers rapid pulses of light to the cornea, until a flap is created. The surgeon lifts the flap and reshapes the cornea for corrected vision. (Patients are awake, but given a sedative so they can relax.) "Most people see, if not perfectly,