

THE CENTER

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the truth behind skin-care myths

Remember how it used to be? You'd go to the store and find a product that promised to do something. But in any of us, the body's natural ability to repair itself is being undermined by the products we're using.



the guide BEAUTY

Skin-care misconceptions, fallacies, and flat-out wishful thinking are as plentiful as skeletons in a dragon's lair. Some are ingrained beliefs passed down for generations, such as the notion that squishy skin is a virtue. Others are convincing for their grounding in "modern technology." But with help from doctors' hard years of research, the truth has at last been separated from the... um, not so much.

Squishy-clean skin is, well, squishy-clean.

REALITY: Overactive hair washing, excessive scrubbing, and using AHA or retinoid products that leave your skin as tight as a drum can actually cause damage, says Cheryl Fisher, a dermatologist in New York City. "The water-chamber function can strip skin of its natural oils and compromise its barrier, which can set you up for irritation and dehydration," she says. Therefore, you should avoid formulas that create harsh surfactants, which not only dry out your skin but also lead to its...

Retinol can prevent wrinkles.

REALITY: Theoretically, yes. But no single cream supports this claim. "If you select the medicine that consistently connects, you're far less apt to see results over time," says Frank's brand's a cosmetic dermatologist with practices in New York City and Coral Gables, Florida. "But other ingredients, like using antioxidants and ensuring proper skin care, are more reliable and provide less expense versus the feeding-off-wrinkles." If you did feel compelled to go under the needle,...

RUMOR Junk food causes acne.

REALITY: "So far, no studies have shown a direct correlation between junk food and breakouts or acne," says David Bank, a dermatologist in Mount Kisco, New York. And most of the other dermatologists interviewed for this story agree with Bank.

RUMOR For best results, use skin-care products from the same line.

REALITY: You don't need to, says Bank: "Generally this is just clever marketing." There are, however, certain ingredients that companies pepper throughout a certain line that are especially efficacious when used together.

week could increase the risk of moderate to severe acne in those who are predisposed to flare-ups. The key, says Hargreaves, is to limit those essential ingredients and balance them out with foods and beverages that contain anti-inflammatory benefits, such as green tea, broccoli, and fish rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which have been linked with a 32 percent decrease risk of acne when eaten at least once a week.

REALITY: You don't need to, says Bank. "Generally this is just clever marketing." There are, however, certain ingredients that companies pepper throughout a certain line that are especially efficacious when used together. For example, you may find a retinoid that contains an antioxidant (vitamin C) and a gel treatment with glycolic acid to prevent future breakouts. "If you're trying to address a specific problem, use what you need," says Dr. Bank. "The packaged approach may make it easier to see results."

REALITY: "No matter how you slice it, you're not going to lose weight by exercising alone. It's a combination of diet and exercise that's key to losing weight," says Dr. Bank. "Volume loss is caused by a decrease in collagen, elastin, and fat—none of which can be replaced by exercise."

RUMOR Facial exercises keep skin taut.

REALITY: "There's no concrete evidence of plumping benefits, either," says Bank. "Volume loss is caused by a decrease in collagen, elastin, and fat—none of which can be replaced by exercise."