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COSMOPOLITAN

The Big Beauty Book



PHOTOGRAPH: LINDSAY ELLERY. MAKEUP: DEANNA MELLUSO AT FORWARD ARTISTS USING ESSENCE COSMETICS AND CATRICE COSMETICS. HAIR STYLISTS: ERIN PIPER HERSCHLEB AT TRACEY MATTINGLY. MODELS: TENYA ELAM AT FREEDOM MODELS. WEARING: TOP: BLUMARINE

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COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: LINDSAY ELLARY
SENIOR FASHION EDITOR: REBECCA JANE HILL
BEAUTY DIRECTOR: KEEKS REID

Model: Tehya Elam at Freedom Models. Makeup: Deanna Melluso at Forward Artists using essence Cosmetics and Catrice Cosmetics. Hair: Erin Piper Herschleb at Tracey Mattingly. Location: Windjammer Landing Resort, Saint Lucia

Bikini, Skims. Necklace, Briwok Jewellery. Ring (right hand); gold ring (left hand), both Pandora. Enamel ring (left hand), Anna + Nina

ents

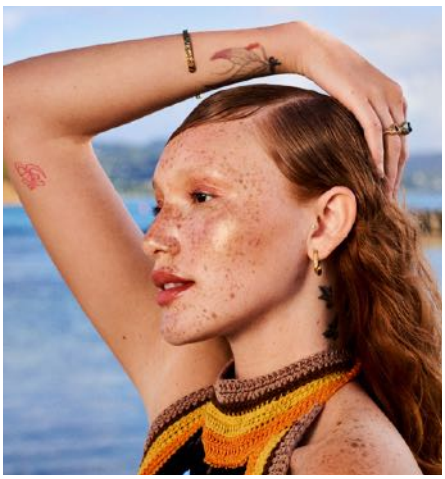


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MODEL WEARS (BOTTOM-RIGHT): DRESS, VINTAGE WALES BONNER AT EBAY. EARRINGS, HYE STUDIO. BRACELET, MISSOMA. TOURMALINE RING, LIBERTY. HEART RING, OTTOMAN HANDS

Contributors



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STAR SIGN: Gemini (boy, am I)

MY BEST-KEPT BEAUTY SECRET IS… Swimming in the sun. There seriously is nothing this combination can't heal.



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MY BEST-KEPT BEAUTY SECRET IS… Blotting paper! It absorbs shine properly, while extra powder just masks grease.



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MY BEST-KEPT BEAUTY SECRET IS… Consistency. I keep things simple, but have been using a prescription retinoid for three decades now.



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MY BEST-KEPT BEAUTY SECRET IS… In a spray bottle, mix conditioner, water and hair perfume. Spritz daily for refreshed curls that smell divine.



Urmi Pandit

BEAUTY ASSISTANT
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HOMETOWN: Ashford, Kent

STAR SIGN: Sagittarius

MY BEST-KEPT BEAUTY SECRET IS… Setting spray between each layer of makeup! Spritz after cream products, then after powder and your makeup will survive anything.



Aimee Connolly

FOUNDER AND CEO OF SCULPTED BY AIMEE
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HOMETOWN: Dublin, Ireland

STAR SIGN: Capricorn

MY BEST-KEPT BEAUTY SECRET IS… Layer your cream and liquid blush for extra pizzazz. Everyone will be asking you what's on your cheeks!



Tom Smith

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MY BEST-KEPT BEAUTY SECRET IS… Homeoplasmine – an iconic French pharmacy skin balm that's great on lips as it's matte but protective.



Rebecca Jane Hill

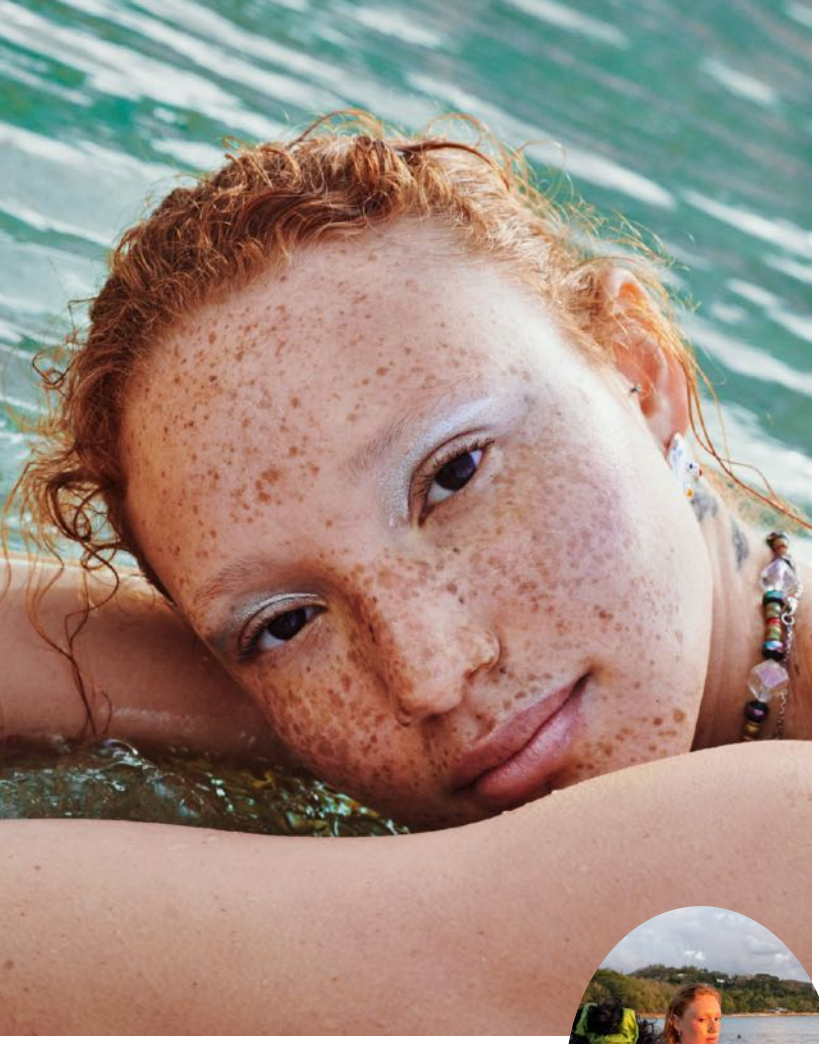
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MY BEST-KEPT BEAUTY SECRET IS… Lipcote! It's only £5 from Boots and keeps any lipstick on for the entire day – it's the best.

PHOTOGRAPHY: DANIEL GARDINER



From the editor

When I started telling loved ones that we were working on this dedicated beauty issue, they were... perplexed. 'How on earth are you going to have enough to write about?' was the general concern. Little did they know that streamlining it to just 100 pages was going to be the real challenge. There's so much happening in beauty right now, and so many questions you want answered. So consider this, *The Big Beauty Book*, the blueprint to your best skin, hair and makeup ever. Whether you're taking your first steps with active ingredients in your skincare (head to page 10) or you're one click away from booking a bob and need a deep dive into every popular cut, who they suit and how the hell to style them at home (page 74), we've got you.

The cover of this issue was shot in Saint Lucia, where we captured the biggest summer makeup trends for *A Wash Of Colour* (page 38). While I was there, I realised just how much beauty shapes my everyday – and I know it shapes yours, too, or you wouldn't be here. My mini epiphany began on the nine-hour flight, as I dipped in and out of my beauty pouch, applying face mists, barrier creams and sheet masks to the mild amusement of my neighbours. It continued as the team clambered for our shared stash of SPF50+, topping up throughout long, sun-soaked days, and later, as I added essential oils to my evening shower to wind down.

Beauty is more than products. It lives in the everyday, from the mundane to the magical, and that's exactly why we loved creating this for you. We've also partnered with some brilliant brands to bring you a bunch of exclusive discounts and giveaways. Just scan the QR code to join Club Cosmo (it's totally free) if you haven't already.

Enjoy!





Keeks Reid
BEAUTY DIRECTOR



Makeup artist Deanna capturing our final look at Windjammer Landing Resort before we wrapped.



It was so bright that this was the only way to check the shots as they were being taken.



Spent the whole day wondering if the fashion team would notice if I 'borrowed' any of these pieces (they would).

COSMOPOLITAN CLUB COSMO

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skin



Skin concerns and hormonal meltdowns have nothing on the expert guidance ahead...

PHOTOGRAPHY: LINDSAY ELLARY. MAKEUP: DEANNA MELLUSO AT FORWARD ARTISTS USING ESSENCE COSMETICS AND CATRICE COSMETICS. HAIR: ERIN PIPER HERS CHLEB AT TRACEY MATTINGLY. MODEL: TEHYA EL AMAT FREEDOM MODELS. TEHYA WEARS: BIKINI, TRIANGL. HAT: FINISH STUDIO



The next-gen ingredients to know

Move over retinoids, there are new actives on the skincare block

WORDS: KEEKS REID

Even as a beauty director, it's hard to keep up with the constantly changing, innovative world of skincare. It feels like, after decades of slow and steady development, now there are 'hero' products launching weekly with ingredients that we can barely pronounce. But what are the new actives that are worth shaking up your routine for? How often should you be using them, and what do they actually do? Look no further, these are the next-gen ingredients that are actually worth knowing...

EXOSOMES

WHAT ARE THEY?

'Exosomes are essentially nature's messengers,' says Mark Curry, co-founder of The Inkey List. 'They are tiny carriers that help skin cells "talk" to each other more effectively.' So what does this mean for your skin? Essentially, better regeneration and repair as they encourage your cells to be better communicators, resulting in your smoothest, most radiant skin yet.

WHO'S IT FOR?

Everyone! As Curry notes, 'They act as quiet optimisers in a skincare routine – not loud and instant, but subtly helping the skin behave like a healthier, more resilient version of itself over time.' As with introducing any new ingredients, though, if you are pregnant or breastfeeding, do consult your medical professional.

HOW TO USE

'Use exosomes on clean, dry skin after cleansing and before heavier serums or moisturisers,' advises Curry. Although it's not an acid and doesn't sting like vitamin A can, you should still start using it just a few times a week and keep the rest of your routine simple, as you build up usage.

Medicube One Day Exosome Shot Pore Ampoule 7500, £25. Trinny London Naked Ambition Azelaic Exosome Serum, £69. The Inkey List Exosome Hydro-Glow Complex, £20







COSMOPOLITAN CLUB COSMO

We have five deluxe The Inkey List bundles to give away to Club Cosmo members – scan the QR code to enter

PDRNs

WHAT ARE THEY?

Have you heard your pals yapping about salmon sperm? Well, it's this, kinda. 'Polydeoxyribonucleotides, or PDRNs, are DNA fragments derived most commonly from purified salmonid (such as trout or salmon) DNA,' says aesthetic doctor David Jack. Ready to put your science cap on? 'PDRN is generally believed to bind to adenosine (A2A) receptors on fibroblasts in the skin, pushing them into a reparative state that favours collagen production.' This process helps form new blood vessels and, as Dr Jack says, 'essentially forces cells into repair processes'.

WHO'S IT FOR?

If you feel like your skin is losing elasticity and is looking less plump, it's definitely one to consider. 'Its relevance in the skin is due to the ability to act as a cellular signal to reduce inflammation and improve things like collagen production,' notes Dr Jack.

HOW TO USE

PDRN can be injected into the skin as a more invasive treatment, but topical, over-the-counter products do work, too – possibly less effectively, or more slowly. 'Topical PDRN works at a more superficial level and relies heavily on formulation quality to allow them to penetrate the skin's barrier,' explains Dr Jack.







Boots Hydrating PDRN Serum, £8. Anua PDRN Hyaluronic Acid 100 Moisturizing Cream, £24. Mediheal PDRN Lifting Toner Pads, £22

BETA-GLUCANS

WHAT ARE THEY?

Beta-glucans, or β-glucans to use their more formal name, are naturally occurring soluble prebiotic fibres and polysaccharides. The ingredient is normally derived from the cell walls of yeast, fungi and fibre-rich cereals, such as oats, barley and grains.

WHO'S IT FOR?

At its core, this ingredient is all about calming redness and helping with skin repair. So if you feel like you might have gone a bit too far with BHAs or AHAs and your skin barrier is feeling a little on the fiery side, this ingredient has you covered.

HOW TO USE

Because this ingredient is so mild in nature, it really is perfect – even for the most super sensitive types of skin. To supercharge beta-glucan's properties, we suggest pairing it with hydrating ingredients, such as a low-molecular hyaluronic acid, so it can max out its absorption into the skin surface.







The Ordinary Natural Moisturizing Factors + Beta Glucan, £12. Lancôme Génifique Ultimate Serum, £70. Reome Active Recovery Broth, £125

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY



Hormones and skin:

periods, pregnancy, perimenopause

Breaking out? Flaky skin? Unexplained irritation? It might be a hormonal shift...

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

Whenever a pimple appears out of nowhere, it can feel random and unfair – and it's usually timed perfectly for the day you finally have a Hinge date worth leaving the house for. But skin isn't chaotic; it's communicative. Breakouts are often your body responding to what's happening beneath the surface. And unfortunately for that date, you're already in a long, complicated, on-again-off-again situationship – and it isn't with them – it's actually with your hormones.

One minute your skin is glowing, obedient and low-maintenance; the next it's breaking out like a stroppy teenager, flaking like filo pastry, or reacting to a moisturiser it loved last week. But before you throw your entire bathroom cabinet in the bin, let's get something straight: most of what your skin does across your life is normal. Hormonal shifts don't mean something is 'wrong'; they mean your body is doing what bodies do. The trick is knowing what phase you're in, what your skin is reacting to and how to support it.

So, here's a tour through the big hormonal moments – periods, pregnancy, perimenopause and beyond – with practical advice from Alexis Granite, a world-renowned expert in medical and aesthetic dermatology, on how to look after your skin through it all – without losing your head (or your skin barrier).

How to know when it's hormonal

Hormonal skin issues tend to follow patterns. 'Common signs are breakouts around the jawline or chin, flare-ups with your cycle or issues that appear suddenly, often coinciding with life stages,' says Dr Granite.

They may also arrive alongside other symptoms: irregular periods, hot flushes, mood shifts and hair and scalp changes. Skin rarely acts alone – it's part of a larger hormonal conversation.

'If acne is persistent, painful or scarring, if pigmentation is worsening or if skin changes are accompanied by symptoms such as disrupted sleep, hot flushes or cycle changes, seek medical advice, as it may be a problem beyond hormones,' says Dr Granite.

A GP or dermatologist can assess whether medication, a hormonal evaluation or options such as HRT may be appropriate. Often, the best outcomes come from combining skincare with lifestyle shifts and, when needed, medical support.

PERIODS

Ah, the menstrual cycle. Sometimes unpredictable, other times unsurprising. For many, skin changes show up in the days before your period, just as you're congratulating yourself on having it all together.

'During the menstrual cycle, in the days before a period, progesterone increases and oestrogen drops, which can trigger excess oil production, congestion and breakouts, often along the chin and jaw. Skin may also feel more sensitive or inflamed at this time,' says Dr Granite.

Don't be alarmed if jawline spots arrive like clockwork, your makeup is sitting strangely, or if products are stinging for no obvious reason. This is classic hormonal acne territory.

THAT TIME OF THE MONTH – FOR YOUR SKIN



PURIFIDE BY ACNECIDE DAILY MOISTURISER, £15.75

While skin can be oily during this phase, it still needs hydration. This lightweight non-greasy moisturiser is perfect for sensitive, spot-prone skin.



HABI FUN BLEMISH STICKERS, £4

Blemishes are inevitable during the menstrual cycle. Tackle them head-on with hydrocolloid stickers to draw out pus.



Q+A NIACINAMIDE GENTLE EXFOLIATING CLEANSER, £7.50

This isn't a time for exfoliation overhaul, but one for targeted actives. Enter: this niacinamide cleanser that'll decongest and balance the skin.

PREGNANCY

Pregnancy skin is the ultimate wildcard. 'Pregnancy brings high oestrogen and progesterone levels,' explains Dr Granite. 'For some women, this means brighter, more hydrated skin, while others experience melasma, pigmentation, sensitivity and hormonal acne.'

Increased blood flow and barrier changes can make skin more reactive, and ingredient tolerance may suddenly plummet. That vitamin A product you loved? Must be avoided during this time. Fragranced skincare? Best to take a break.

This is a phase where simplicity is your friend. Prioritise barrier-supporting ingredients and diligent sun protection (especially if pigmentation appears), and accept that skin may behave differently for a while. This isn't the time to chase perfection – it's the time to protect and support.

YOUR BUMP-FRIENDLY BEAUTY PICKS



SKIN+ME BRIGHTEN + BOOST CALMING AZELAIC ACID SERUM, £19.99

Hyperpigmentation and melasma are common during pregnancy. A great ingredient for improving its appearance is azelaic acid.



TIRTIR MATCHA SKIN TONER, £21

Soothe redness, protect the skin from external irritations and control oil with this sensitive toner.



DR.JART+ PREJUVENATION FIRMING BAKUCHIOL SERUM, £49

Retinol and any other retinoids are not safe to use during pregnancy. Instead, use the plant-based alternative, bakuchiol; it provides similar benefits.



Skincare that helps (and that hinders)

Skincare can manage symptoms, but it can't fix hormones on its own. Dr Granite recommends using ingredients that both support and soothe. 'Ceramides, glycerin, dimethicone, hyaluronic acid, squalane, panthenol and niacinamide help maintain comfort and resilience,' she says. Azelaic acid is particularly useful for tackling breakouts, redness and pigmentation with good tolerability.

Proceed with caution when it comes to aggressive exfoliating acids, harsh cleansers, frequent peels and overusing actives. 'Hormonal skin is less forgiving. Irritation can worsen breakouts and pigmentation rather than improve them,' notes Dr Granite.

PERIMENOPAUSE

If puberty was the first rude awakening, perimenopause is the sequel no one warned you about. The transitional phase before menopause usually occurs between 45 and 55.

'Perimenopause and menopause can be one of the most challenging phases for adult skin,' says Dr Granite. 'Oestrogen fluctuates, leading to breakouts, dryness and sensitivity.'

Collagen production starts to rapidly decline (even more than it already was), healing slows and the skin barrier becomes easier to disrupt. The result is skin that feels thinner, more reactive and occasionally... unfamiliar.

This is where many people panic and overcorrect. And while it's easier said than done, don't. Over-exfoliating, stripping cleansers and too many actives can worsen irritation and pigmentation. Instead, restore your barrier first with richer moisturisers, lipid replenishment and well-chosen actives used strategically, rather than aggressively.

PERIMENOPAUSE CALLING? THESE PRODUCTS ANSWER



FACETHEORY HYDRAOAT SOOTHING DAILY MOISTURISER, £16

Lipids need replenishing during perimenopause and this fragrance-free moisturiser repairs the skin barrier with ease.



ABSOLUTE COLLAGEN MARINE LIQUID COLLAGEN SUPPLEMENT, £33.99

Ingestible collagen is a great way to reduce fine lines and wrinkles. These sachets help with hair growth, too.



SKIN ROCKS THE RICH MOISTURISER, £69

Soft, conditioned, resilient skin this way!

TOP TIP: Opt for the fragrance-free formulation of this product if you're more prone to irritation.

MENOPAUSE

Post-menopause, oestrogen levels remain low, but more stable. Skin often becomes drier, thinner and less resilient, with fine lines and texture more noticeable.

'In this phase, collagen loss accelerates, elasticity decreases and fine lines become more apparent,' says Dr Granite. 'Some women notice fewer breakouts but more sensitivity, dryness, itching and crepiness.' This isn't skin failing – it's changing. Good hydration, sun protection and barrier support become non-negotiable.

Retinoids can still be valuable, but tolerance matters more than maximal strength. Slow, steady and nourishing wins the race here.

MENOPAUSE, MEET YOUR MVPS



WELEDA SKIN FOOD, £9.50

Sensitivity, dryness and itching are more common during the menopause phase. Calm discomfort with this rich, intensive moisturiser that works on the face and body.



REOME HYDRA-PLASMA VEIL, SET OF 5, £98

With six pioneering ingredients – hydrolysed collagen, adenosine and chamomile, to name a few – these masks lend instant hydration and repair.



CAUDALÍE VERY HIGH PROTECTION LIGHTWEIGHT CREAM SPF50+, £18

Sun protection is always a non-negotiable, but when menopause hits, it should be your priority.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GALLERYSTOCK, STOCKSY



Skin got you down?

From damaged skin barriers to pigmentation, we get the low-down on managing the most common concerns from top dermatologists

WORDS: URMI PANDIT

HOW DO I MANAGE MY... SKIN BARRIER?

Dryness, peeling, breakouts and sudden inflammation can be telltale signs of a compromised (and overwhelmed) skin barrier. Often, that's from overusing active ingredients in your skincare, washing your face with very hot water, sun damage or harsh exfoliants.

SOLUTION 1: SKINCARE

Cosmetic nurse prescriber Alice Henshaw explains that barrier repair calls for deep hydration and protection. 'Use a gentle cleanser, a well-formulated moisturiser and targeted actives which, when introduced gradually, can make a significant difference.' Hyaluronic acid and ceramides will lock in moisture, vitamin C in the morning can support the skin in dealing with environmental stressors (UV rays, pollution) and regenerative products with exosomes may be helpful in supporting skin recovery. 'And daily SPF is non-negotiable, regardless of the season,' adds Henshaw.

SOLUTION 2: LIFESTYLE

A few lifestyle fixes can also come in handy when keeping your skin barrier strong. Incorporating fatty acids and probiotics into your diet are key – as is getting good sleep and managing stress.



Simple 3% Hyaluronic Acid + Vitamin B5 Hydrate+ Serum, £9.99. Boots Modern Chemistry Glow 10% Vitamin C Serum With Ferulic Acid, £13. COSRX PDRN Exosome Skinplaning Glaze Mask, £22.99

HOW DO I MANAGE MY... ROSACEA?

Rosacea, a form of chronic inflammation, is usually characterised by redness and a 'flushed' face. Flare-ups can bring stinging, irritation and uncomfortable sensitivity.

SOLUTION 1: SKINCARE

Super calming, anti-inflammatory skincare, with formulas that contain soothing ingredients can help here. 'For rosacea, the best products will make your skin feel less reactive, not more "worked on",' says Dr Sophie Shotter, an aesthetic doctor. 'Cleansers should be low-foam and creamy (so as not to strip the skin), while a good moisturiser will be fragrance-free and barrier-supporting (think ceramides, glycerin and oat-based formulas).' Azelaic acid may be helpful in reducing the appearance of redness and blemish-like bumps. Overall, your skin will respond best when you focus on reduction and protection rather than forcing quick results, stresses Dr Shotter. 'Avoid inflammatory fragrances, essential oils, scrubs, strong chemical exfoliants and alcohol-based and high-strength acne products,' all of which can trigger sensitive skin.



Erborian Centella Barrier Cream, £29. Rosalique 3-in-1 Balm Cleanser, £29.99; Aveeno Calm + Restore Nourishing Oat Cleanser, £9.49; Anua Azelaic Acid 10+ Hyaluron Redness Soothing Serum, £22

SOLUTION 2: TREATMENTS

In some persistent cases, Dr Shotter suggests speaking to a dermatologist about prescription treatment options or medication, where appropriate, such as hyaluronic injectables (for over 21s only).

HOW DO I MANAGE MY... PIGMENTATION?

Melasma, post-breakout scars and dark spots can be frustrating to deal with, whether they're down to hormonal factors, sun damage or ageing.

SOLUTION 1: SKINCARE

Consultant dermatologist Dr Alexis Granite recommends looking out for topical brightening ingredients, particularly vitamin C, retinol and alpha arbutin. 'Serums effectively deliver high-potency actives, while masks and exfoliating treatments can be occasional add-ons that may help brighten skin appearance and even out skin tone.' Use an antioxidant serum each morning and a retinoid two to four times a week, starting with a low potency. And seeing as UV damage is a common cause of pigmentation, 'use a high-factor SPF daily', advises Dr Granite. 'Avoid the sun at peak times and invest in a wide-brimmed hat.'



Naturium AHA Exfoliating Mask 10%, £22. Q+A Retinol 0.2% Facial Serum, £12.50. Medik8 Crystal Retinal 1 Serum, £45. The Ordinary Alpha Arbutin 2% + HA Serum, £10.50



Supergoop! Play Everyday Lotion SPF50, £23. CeraVe Invisible Hydrating Fluid Sunscreen SPF50, £17.90

SOLUTION 2: TREATMENTS

Intense Pulsed Light (IPL) and BroadBand Light (BBL) are two non-invasive treatments often used to treat visible sun spots. Dr Granite also suggests micro-needling and gentle chemical peels, if texture and dullness are additional concerns.

HOW DO I MANAGE MY... BLACKHEADS?

When clogged pores turn into blackheads, the underlying problem is usually excess oil production. So, dealing with blackheads will (unfortunately) be an ongoing process rather than a one-off miracle treatment.

SOLUTION 1: SKINCARE

According to Henshaw, BHA-based formulas are great for targeting blackheads, 'because salicylic acid is oil-soluble and able to penetrate into the pore lining to dissolve congestion'. Opt for clarifying cleansers and 2% BHA exfoliants, says Henshaw, and niacinamide-based toners are also helpful for regulating oil production and refining the appearance of pores without disrupting the skin barrier.



Paula's Choice 2% BHA Liquid Exfoliant, £35. Facetheory Porebright Niacinamide Refining Toner, £15. Murad Clarifying Cleanser, £29

SOLUTION 2: TREATMENTS

'For more persistent blackheads, lasers, practitioner-led facials and light chemical peels can help to deeply cleanse pores, improve skin clarity and enhance results when combined with a consistent at-home skincare routine,' explains Henshaw. She adds that regular maintenance treatments tend to deliver the best long-term improvement.

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY. ALWAYS CHECK THE SUITABILITY OF TREATMENTS WITH A GP OR DERMATOLOGIST

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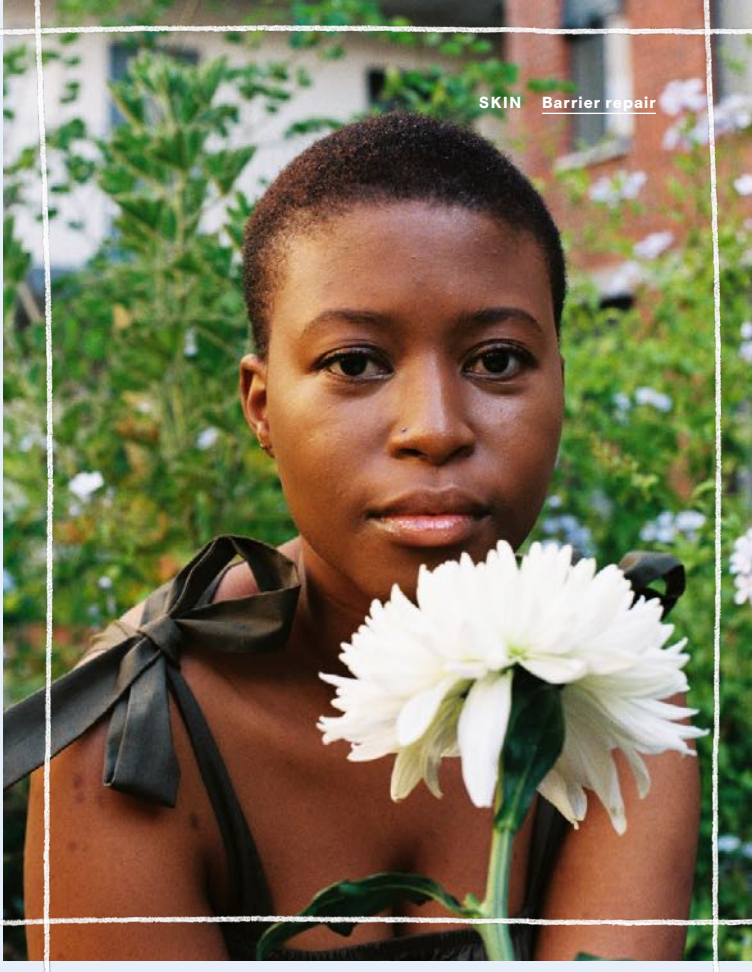
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Elaine Forster, *Cosmopolitan* subscriber

feefo EXCELLENT - 4.1 OUT OF 5



Your skin is crying out for a barrier repair cream

Buh-bye irritation

WORDS: KEEKS REID

So, you've been a little too enthusiastic with exfoliating acids and your skin is feeling tight, sensitive or straight-up stressed. Don't panic, all is not lost. Allow us to introduce you to the not-so-humble category of barrier repair creams. These formulas have boomed in the past few years and are packed with skin-soothing and nourishing ingredients designed to strengthen and repair without causing further irritation.



GOOD FOR... IRRITATED SKIN

Bubble Soft Swerve Barrier Restore Balm, £18

Absolutely stacked with squalane, ceramides, shea butter and niacinamide, this whipped balm soothes dryness, redness and irritation. It's gentle enough for sensitivity and perfect for dry, stressed skin. It's particularly great if the summer sun wreaks havoc with your face, soothing itchy, sweaty skin.



GOOD FOR... SENSITIVE SKIN

Kiehl's Ultra Advanced Repair Facial Barrier Cream, £38

This nourishing cream is formulated with gentle ingredients that mimic your skin's natural lipids and is mixed with colloidal oatmeal and beta-glucan for an extra soothing boost. It deeply hydrates, calms irritation and visibly smoothes texture for healthier skin. Even the world's fussiest skin will lap this up!



GOOD FOR... DRY SKIN

Neal's Yard Remedies Oat & Ceramide Barrier Repair Cream, £38

This rich, buttery-smooth moisturiser is ideal for stressed, dry skin that has a compromised barrier. It's formulated with prebiotic oat extract, plant-based ceramides and magnesium, so it deeply hydrates, reduces visible irritation and leaves skin softer, smoother and strengthened.



GOOD FOR... SERIOUSLY DAMAGED SKIN

La Roche-Posay Cicaplast Balm B5 Multi-Purpose Repairing Balm, £11

Messed up your skin with a potent mixture of retinol and BHAs? This cult dermatological favourite helps repair a compromised skin barrier, fast! It is loaded with panthenol, madecassoside and a prebiotic complex, to calm irritation, nourish dry patches and protect sensitive skin.



GOOD FOR... OILY SKIN

Garnier Hyaluron Barrier Repair Water Gel, £7.49

Many barrier repair creams are thicker to really nourish skin, but this gel-like formula is perfect for oily or spot-prone skin. Don't let the light texture fool you – it still hydrates skin for up to 48 hours, plus it helps strengthen your skin's barrier, leaving it feeling smooth, refreshed and comfortable.

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

Are online prescription skincare services worth it?

Today, getting dermatologist-prescribed treatments tailored to your skin takes just a few clicks – *Cosmo* Beauty puts five to the test

Using expert dermatologists and doctors, new online prescription skincare services can digitally decipher how to help your skin and deliver a tailored package straight to your front door. We tried out the most hyped ones, to decide if they genuinely solved our derm dilemmas*. Here are the five we really rated.

Noli

noli.com



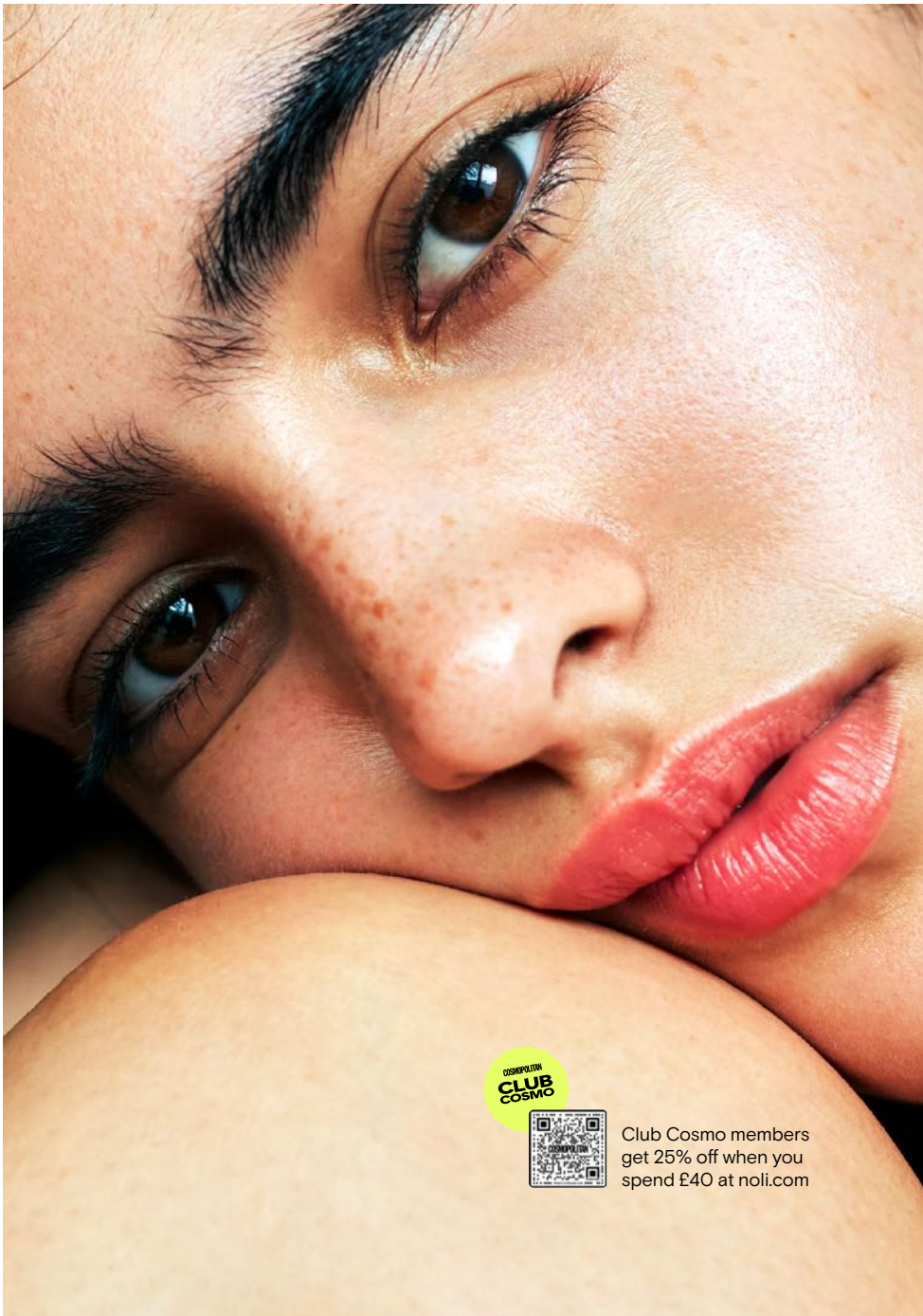
PRICING:
Free analysis

TESTED BY:
Urmi Pandit,
Cosmo beauty assistant

Noli doesn't have its own skincare range, so this AI-powered skin analysis felt all about the process. Not to mention quick: it took me just four minutes to complete.

I submitted a photo and my main skin concerns (blemishes and oily skin). Questions were both practical (what my budget is) and prescriptive (how my skin reacts to new products and if I prefer them fragranced or not). My final report listed which ingredients I needed for each goal, how each one works, plus a step-by-step routine with products I could buy through the site. I opted for two (a gentle dark spot cleanser and a silky retinol serum-in-cream) and I'm excited to see results in a few weeks.

For a thorough consultation with a dermatologist, look elsewhere. But for skincare newbies looking for a speedy overview at a decent price point, it's worth a try.



COSMOPOLITAN CLUB COSMO
Club Cosmo members get 25% off when you spend £40 at noli.com

Klira
klira.skin



PRICING:
From £59 per month
TESTED BY:
Charlotte Bitmead, beauty contributor

The online questionnaire involved questions such as 'How much sun exposure do you usually get?' to 'What does your mum's skin look like?' and determined my skin type through pictures.

I then received my prescription within a day. I have rosacea and I'm acne-prone, so it included ingredients such as azelaic acid, ivermectin and tretinoin. While I opted just for the own-brand serum, Klira recommended a full routine, which included budget-friendly brands. I was a tretinoin first-timer, which resulted in some predictable purging, but after a month I noticed fewer rosacea flare-ups and my skin was smoother and more glowy.

But my one bugbear? The packaging. It was refillable but not airtight and didn't travel well. Overall, though, I was impressed with the ingredients on offer and the results.

GetHarley
getharley.com



PRICING:
From £40, plus products
TESTED BY:
Lia Mappoura, *Cosmo* beauty writer

A derm consultation from the comfort of your own home? I couldn't have signed up faster. Even better, I bagged myself an appointment within a week. I shared my skin concerns via video call with the dermatologist (predominantly acne, scarring, pigmentation and sensitivity) and, from an impressive network of skincare professionals, I was assigned my own specialist.

After a chat, the specialist talked me through her recommendations before sending me a 'how-to' plan via WhatsApp. Mine featured five products worth £338.60 (which isn't included in the consultation price). This sum can be paid in monthly instalments and you're under no obligation to buy it all.

While it's undeniably pricey if you do opt to purchase all the products, I thought the service was fantastic. I was able to figure out which ingredients I was missing to target problem areas, and I've seen an all-round improvement in my complexion.

Renude
renude.com



PRICING:
From £20 for a consultation, plus products
TESTED BY: Elena Chabo, beauty contributor

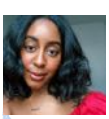
Before my virtual consultation, I went through the usual questions and uploading photos process. Treatment-wise, there were five price brackets to choose from (I opted for the second lowest to see what could be achieved without bankrupting myself with high-end buys). Next, I had a short video chat to discuss my habits and goals so the doctor could compile a routine for my needs, which was added to my account to purchase.

First impressions were great. I never thought I had dry skin, but ever since the doctor explained that my fine lines could be a result of dehydration, I've had plumper, more glowing skin from following her routine.

Admittedly, I'm fussy when it comes to skincare, but I can honestly say I liked every recommended product. Yes, there were a few more steps than I'm used to, but everything went on seamlessly and I liked that you can buy the products independently and individually.

**Pssst! For more complex skin concerns, an in-person visit to the GP or dermatologist is always recommended.*

Dermatica
dermatica.co.uk



PRICING:
From £24.99 per month
TESTED BY:
Keeks Reid, *Cosmo* beauty director

My skin is actually in pretty good shape; the only thing I wanted help with was hyperpigmentation. I filled in a questionnaire about my skin type and routine before submitting pictures of my face. It was convenient, but I did wonder how thorough it could be, seeing as I was in charge of the images shared and not doing it face to face.

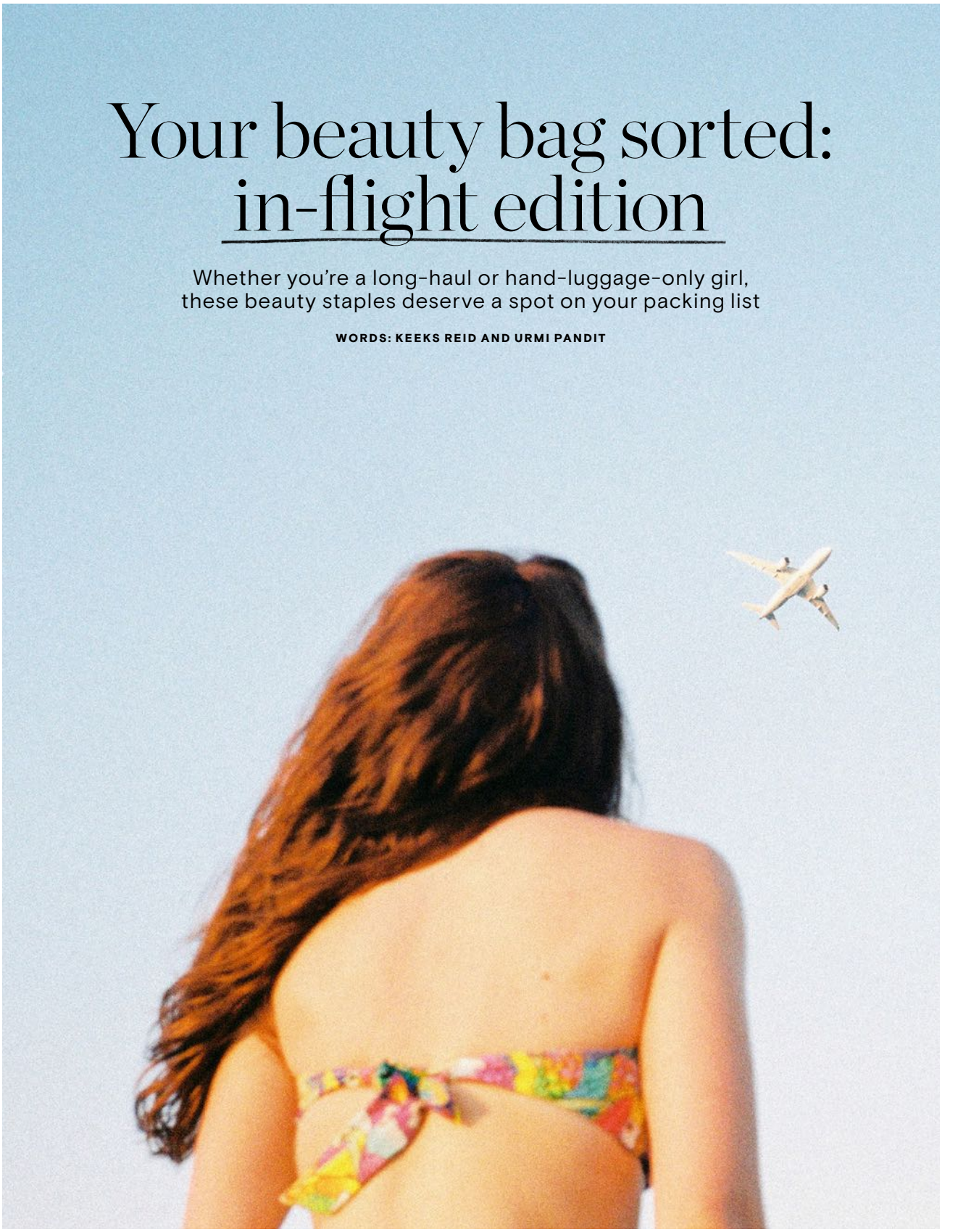
I was prescribed an own-brand 15ml tube of cream, which contained 0.015% tretinoin, 4% niacinamide and 4% azelaic acid, and was told how to introduce it into my routine. To start, I used the cream a few times a week, then eventually every evening. After a month, my hyperpigmentation had faded slightly. Each month, your prescription changes to refocus on your concerns and once you're happy with your skin, you can cancel. In my opinion, it's an easy, low-commitment, low-interaction service.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GALLERY STOCK

Your beauty bag sorted: in-flight edition

Whether you're a long-haul or hand-luggage-only girl, these beauty staples deserve a spot on your packing list

WORDS: KEEKS REID AND URMI PANDIT



If you're anything like the *Cosmo* beauty team, trying to fit all your many (many, many…) beauty essentials into a carry-on is no easy task. But years of practice – and discovering the most hardworking formulas in travel-friendly sizes – has created this fail-safe checklist.

IF YOU'RE FLYING SHORT HAUL…

We know; a short flight calls for a film, not a 10-step skincare routine. But these goodies make the journey a little more enjoyable



SANITISER

Beauty Pie Good Hands No Rinse Hand Cleansing Gel, £5

Hand sanitiser is a non-negotiable. A whole flight with nothing to do but touch your face constantly? This will help prevent future spots from cropping up.



MIST

The Inkey List Hydro-Surge Dewy Face Mist, £11

It might make you feel like a beauty fiend, but an in-flight spritz truly is a treat. It will reawaken your skin, leaving you looking plump and bouncy.

LIP BALM



Gisou Honey Glaze Collagen Therapy Lip Mask, £24

However short the flight, your lips will usually be the first to feel the dry cabin air. Gisou's buttery lip mask is as adorable as it is nourishing – one small swipe works wonders.

IF YOU'RE FLYING LONG HAUL…

On a longer journey, there are some extra steps you can take to minimise looking like a dried-out raisin on the other side



CLEANSER

Garnier Micellar Cleansing Water for Sensitive Skin – Travel Size, £3.49

We won't judge you if you wear makeup to the airport for a meet-cute sitch. On the flight, though, wipe it all off – your skin will thank you.



DOES-IT-ALL MOISTURISER

Summer Fridays Jet Lag Mask, £26

Apply this mask after cleansing and as you need it – even on your hands if they get dry. The glycerin and hyaluronic acid make it the perfect quencher for parched skin.

EYE DE-PUFFER



111Skin Cryo De-Puffing Eye Mask, £85 for a pack of 8 masks

111Skin gives the best results, but if a full face mask is too much, under-eye patches are simpler, cheaper and great for night flights.



ORAL CARE

Colgate Total Active Prevention Original Travel Toothpaste, £1.50

Few things make you feel as refreshed as a quick brush before landing. It makes a huge difference – for yourself and for those around you.



BARRIER SEAL

Eucerin Aquaphor Soothing Skin Balm, £14.50

Eczema sufferers will know the arid plane air can exacerbate flare-ups. A coat of this salve on irritated skin areas will help to prevent them occurring.



EYE DROPS

Boots Tired Eyes Eye Drops, £3.99

The air pressure and hours of movie-watching can leave eyes dry and bloodshot. Apply eye drops at the start and end of your flight to help ease the effects.

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

Passport to pore-fection

Because beauty editors don't shop globally by accident

WORDS: KEEKS REID

Over the past decade as a beauty director, I have seen the globalisation of beauty steadily rise. Ten years ago, having access to American brands felt like a true luxury, but now we have the whole world of beauty at our fingertips. From K-beauty to A-beauty, we're able to craft a routine tailored to our needs, picking products from each part of the world and making our routines look like a United Nations meeting of products.

'The UK beauty scene is incredibly open to global innovation,' says Grace Vernon, head of Boots Ignite, Foresight & Trends, and she notes that 65% of shoppers have bought a beauty product from an international brand in the past six months. With interest and innovation spiking, there has never been a better time to dive in. As Vernon says, 'more globally recognised ingredients like hyaluronic acid, peptides and ceramides will still play an important role, but consumers are now layering them with regional-specific actives that bring performance and added benefits'.

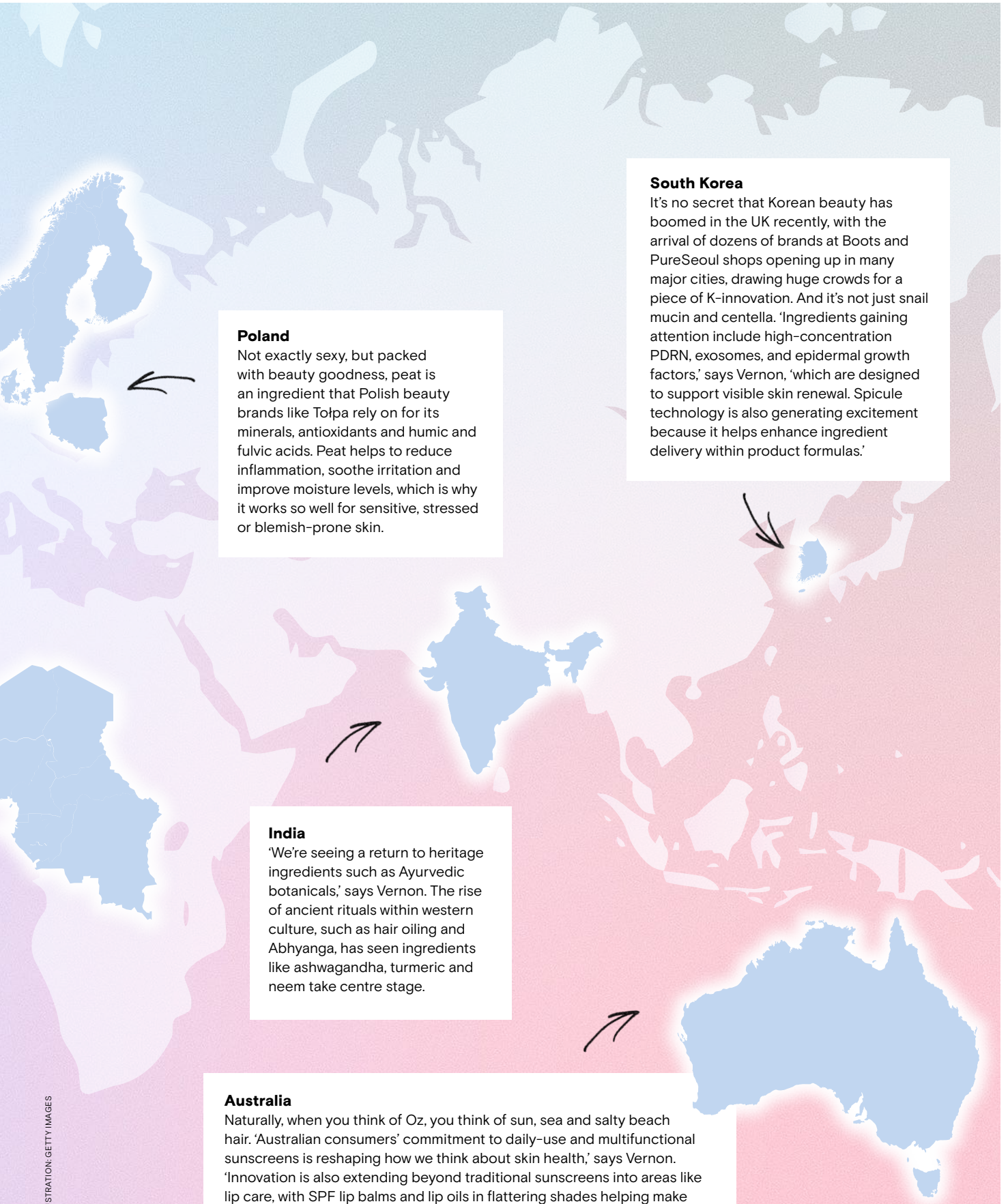
Here, we highlight the countries that offer the very best when it comes to beauty and some of the ingredients we can't get enough of.

The Nordics

The connection between beauty and wellness is at the forefront of the Nordic lifestyle, and with brands such as Lumene and Maria Nila, you can see the holistic approach to products. 'Nordic beauty and wellness routines are grounded in a protective and preventative approach, while being deeply aligned to the natural world,' says Vernon. When it comes to Nordic ingredients, she suggests 'those that thrive in harsh climates, such as Arctic cloudberry and Nordic birch, [which] are rich in minerals, antioxidants and amino acids to nourish skin that's dried out by busy lifestyles and changing seasons'.

Central and west Africa

Countries like Ghana, Nigeria and the Congo are rich in ingredients that naturally suit more melanated skin, but anyone looking for deep moisturisation and skin nourishment can benefit. Raw shea butter makes for an excellent anti-inflammatory emollient, while nutrient-rich oils like marula and moringa serve as antioxidants.



Poland
Not exactly sexy, but packed with beauty goodness, peat is an ingredient that Polish beauty brands like Tołpa rely on for its minerals, antioxidants and humic and fulvic acids. Peat helps to reduce inflammation, soothe irritation and improve moisture levels, which is why it works so well for sensitive, stressed or blemish-prone skin.

South Korea
It's no secret that Korean beauty has boomed in the UK recently, with the arrival of dozens of brands at Boots and PureSeoul shops opening up in many major cities, drawing huge crowds for a piece of K-innovation. And it's not just snail mucin and centella. 'Ingredients gaining attention include high-concentration PDRN, exosomes, and epidermal growth factors,' says Vernon, 'which are designed to support visible skin renewal. Spicule technology is also generating excitement because it helps enhance ingredient delivery within product formulas.'

India
'We're seeing a return to heritage ingredients such as Ayurvedic botanicals,' says Vernon. The rise of ancient rituals within western culture, such as hair oiling and Abhyanga, has seen ingredients like ashwagandha, turmeric and neem take centre stage.

Australia
Naturally, when you think of Oz, you think of sun, sea and salty beach hair. 'Australian consumers' commitment to daily-use and multifunctional sunscreens is reshaping how we think about skin health,' says Vernon. 'Innovation is also extending beyond traditional sunscreens into areas like lip care, with SPF lip balms and lip oils in flattering shades helping make sun protection easier and more desirable to wear every day.'

ILLUSTRATION: GETTY IMAGES

DIY or derm?

We delve into the home skincare and pro treatments that tackle the signs of ageing

WORDS: KEEKS REID

In a world that continues to serve us the latest freshly pumped faces of celebrities who swear their only intervention is rubbing in some hyaluronic acid serum or worse, olive oil (looking at you, JLo), it's hard to know what actually helps slow the visible signs of skin ageing. From in-clinic treatments to resurfacing facials, the works are available to you if you have the budget (and the pain threshold). But, compared to expensive salon treatments, how far could topical products go? To find out, we spoke to a professional...

Dull skin

Your face is lacking that radiant glow of youth and nothing seems able to bring back the spark.

AT HOME

There is so much that you can do to help liven up dull skin at home. In fact, the first suggested tweak is to do with your sleep – not your skincare – routine. 'Lifestyle factors such as sleep, stress and circulation play a role, which is why radiance is often the first thing to dull during busy or stressful periods,' says *Cosmo*'s contributing aesthetics expert Ahmed El Muntasar. Once you've fixed these factors, you can start to incorporate actives that improve cell turnover, such as gentle retinols and vitamin C.

IN CLINIC

Facials that incorporate exfoliation and gentle resurfacing may help boost brightness – but only on a surface level compared to in-clinic options. 'Some salon treatments are designed to support hydration and overall skin quality, so some people may find the results more noticeable or longer-lasting.'





PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

Ageing and tech neck

Our necks (and hands) are the first place to see signs of ageing and notoriously hard to treat as the skin is so thin.

AT HOME

'Hydration is essential, as the neck can become very dry due to movement and friction,' notes Dr El Muntasar. He recommends gentle retinol products designed specifically for the neck, as these can help with early fine lines. Tech neck and bad posture can contribute to early neck ageing, too, so consider this an alert to put down your smartphone.

IN CLINIC

'Polynucleotides are excellent for helping to improve overall skin quality and repair, while collagen-stimulating treatments can improve firmness over time,' advises Dr El Muntasar.

Uneven texture

Bumpy, rough skin is cropping up in patches on your face, or you find that spots and enlarged pores leave pitting in your skin.

AT HOME

If the skin on your face is mostly smooth with some rough patches, it's possible to improve this at home with regular exfoliation. Try adding a BHA/AHA toner or serum into your weekly routine, slowly building up usage - this will encourage cell turnover. If you have uneven texture due to enlarged pores or acne scarring, home skincare may have limited impact.

IN CLINIC

For those more noticeable patches of uneven texture, 'consider in-clinic treatments such as microneedling and laser', says Dr El Muntasar, 'as they stimulate collagen production and resurface the skin in a controlled way – whereas topical products work differently.'

Remember! Aesthetic treatments are a personal choice and are not something that should be done without thorough consultation. No one 'needs' skin treatments or 'tweakments' – we're just here to help you make informed decisions about your body.

Sun damage

Be honest – how much time have you spent sunning yourself with little to no protection? And now your skin is crying out for some TLC. Uneven pigmentation, lack of elasticity and fine lines... all can be a result of ignoring the SPF.

AT HOME

Bad news: sun damage that's already really visible on your face and/or chest is pretty tricky to treat at home. You can fade the appearance of age spots with a consistent routine including an antioxidant serum, but you can't fully reverse sun damage at home. You can prevent more damage with a daily dose of SPF30 or above, though.

IN CLINIC

'To address established photo-ageing [sun damage], some people may explore in-clinic procedures that remove damaged skin and stimulate new collagen production,' says Dr El Muntasar. He advises that laser and resurfacing treatments may help improve the appearance of photo-ageing in some cases.

Fine lines and wrinkles

Spoiler: ageing will – eventually – come for us all (if we're lucky). Often the first sign that collagen levels are depleting is the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles.

AT HOME

We don't have enough fingers and toes to count the number of products that launch every year promising to smooth out any creases – but can anything come close to in-clinic treatments for softening the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles? At home you can do this with a strict regimen of retinoids and hydrating serums, but topical treatment is unlikely to make a major difference to more established wrinkles, and results are usually subtle.

IN CLINIC

'For established fine lines and wrinkles, particularly those linked to repeated facial movement, some people may consider in-clinic treatments,' says Dr El Muntasar. If collagen loss has caused noticeable sagging that you want to address, talk to a reputable doctor about your options.

Tooled up!



The best beauty gadgets that will actually tackle your skin concerns

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

Once upon a time, beauty tech felt quite gimmicky – flashy, very expensive and a bit intimidating. Now? It's basically skincare with a power button. Recent advancements in technology have really changed the game – from face-snatching massagers and glow-boosting LED masks to at-home advanced lasers, these high-tech gadgets promise to smooth, sculpt and zap their way through just about every skin concern going. But let's be real – when gadgets cost more than your monthly food shop, 'worth it' really has to mean something.

We're here to separate the science from the sales pitch. Over the years, the *Cosmopolitan* beauty team have tried and tested hundreds (yep, hundreds) of beauty skincare devices. Ahead, we've picked out the eight worthy of your hard-earned cash.

Best for: LIFTING, TONING AND GLOW

Ziip Halo 2.0, £379.99

WHAT IS IT?

A smart facial device that uses a combination of microcurrents and nanocurrents to lift, tone and rejuvenate your skin. While microcurrents work on the facial muscles for instant sculpting, nanocurrents target skin cells to boost collagen and elastin over time. This gadget syncs with an app that offers targeted treatments for everything from dullness to breakouts.



PROS

- Visible lifting effects
- App-guided routines
- Customisable treatments for different concerns

Best for: SCULPTING AND COLLAGEN PRODUCTION

Medicube Age-R Booster Pro Ex, £289

WHAT IS IT?

A multitasking tool with six functions: electroporation to increase product efficacy and absorption; microcurrents to firm; EMS (electric muscle stimulation) to sculpt your face; LED light therapy to help increase collagen production; sonic vibration to relax and soothe; and electric needles to boost elasticity and even skin texture and tone.



PROS

- Easy to create a specific skincare routine with varying functions
- Voice guidance throughout use
- The charge lasts around three weeks

Best for: MINIMISING ACNE AND BREAKOUTS

Face Gym Acne Light Shot Device, £63

WHAT IS IT?

A hands-free device that harnesses professional-grade blue light therapy to target acne at its source. The light works by killing bacteria deep within pores, helping to reduce the size and frequency of breakouts, and calming inflammation. Adhesive strips make it comfortable to wear and the quick, targeted treatment sessions are ideal for when blemishes flare up.

PROS

- Hands-free, on-the-go treatment
- Soothes inflammation and can support healing
- Quick and targeted sessions



Best for: ACHIEVING AN AT-HOME FACIAL GLOW

Shark FacialPro Glow Glow-Boosting At-Home Facial System, £299.99

WHAT IS IT?

An all-in-one at-home facial device that combines cleansing, exfoliation and serum infusion with warming and cooling technology. Designed to mimic spa-level exfoliation, it preps skin, boosts product absorption and leaves your complexion visibly brighter in minutes (sensitive skin types may, however, experience redness – but this should subside).

PROS

- Creates an instant post-facial glow
- Easy, step-by-step guided treatments
- Works with your existing skincare
- Noticeably smooths skin texture



PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

TIP:
Always follow instructions carefully to make sure you're getting the best out of your device (and money!).



Best for: REDUCING VISIBLE SIGNS OF AGEING

Current Body LED Red Light Therapy Face Mask, £399.99

WHAT IS IT?

A soft LED mask that delivers multiple wavelengths of light for a full-face anti-ageing treatment. Red and near-infrared light work to stimulate collagen and elastin production, helping to smooth fine lines, improve elasticity and boost radiance. The deep near-infrared penetrates even further to support cellular repair and overall skin health.

PROS

- Clinically backed LED wavelengths
- Improves firmness and glow
- Comfortable and flexible

Best for: TARGETING FINE LINES AND WRINKLES

Nira Pro Laser (2nd Gen), £587



WHAT IS IT?

A targeted device that reduces fine lines. Using low-level laser light therapy (LLLT), it stimulates collagen beneath the skin's surface without damaging its barrier, making it safe for use around the eyes and mouth.

PROS

- Clinically proven wrinkle reduction
- Safe for daily use
- Professional-level results over time

Best for: DAILY CLEANSING

Foreo Luna 4 2-In-1 Smart Facial Cleansing & Firming Massage Device, £189



WHAT IS IT?

A silicone cleansing brush paired with a firming massage mode. High-frequency pulses cleanse pores while the reverse side delivers a targeted massage to help sculpt and refresh tired-looking skin.

PROS

- Hygienic silicone material
- Gentle enough for sensitive skin
- Boosts circulation and glow

Best for: BANISHING CLOGGED PORES

Benefit The Porefessional Degunker Blackhead & Pore Cleansing Tool, £32.50

WHAT IS IT?

A stainless steel extraction tool designed to remove blackheads, excess oil and pore-clogging debris. It's made to be used after the brand's clay mask to keep skin looking clearer and smoother.



PROS

- Manual extraction gives user control
- Face mask *and* extraction tool

COSMOPOLITAN CLUB COSMO

We have a Shark FacialPro system and a Benefit beauty bundle up for grabs via Club Cosmo

It's the pimple patch-off!

These are the best spot stickers on the market now

WORDS: *COSMO* BEAUTY TEAM

Pimple patches, spot stickers, blemish pads – whatever you call them, these bad boys are a game changer when it comes to tackling zits. Ahead, some of the best around – tried and tested, as per.

Best for a quick treatment

Restored The Pimple Patches, £9



Hydrocolloid and 1% salicylic acid band together to minimise spontaneous breakouts with speed. Call this the powerhouse of spot stickers.

PRO Each pack offers cute designs!
CON They're better at visibly reducing redness than pus.

Best invisible option

The Inkey List Hydrocolloid Invisible Pimple Patches, £9



With blemish-busting ingredients like salicylic acid and ectoin, these patches are a discreet option, and for an affordable price.

PRO These patches are just as thin and invisible as the name suggests – even under makeup.
CON Those with oilier skin might find these peel off after a while.

Best for multiple spots

Dots For Spots Mega Blemish Treatment Patches, £13.99



For days when your skin is stressed to the max, Dots For Spots has you covered with these extra-large patches, which act as a catch-all dressing for multiple spots.

PRO These have tapered edges to blend into your skin.
CON These are heavy-duty enough that you'll feel them on your face.

Best for overnight

Cetaphil Gentle Clear 6 Hour Fast Clear Pimple Patches, £8.50



Enriched with cica to soothe the redness and irritation that comes hand in hand with pimples, these long-lasting stickers won't budge throughout the night.

PRO They reduce the size of spots quickly and infuse them with salicylic acid at the same time.
CON These patches do look noticeable on the skin.

Best for a cute design

Starface Hydro-Stars Hydrocolloid Pimple Patches, £11.99



The OG and a celebrity fave for good reason! Not only does the hydrocolloid-packed design seriously speed up the healing time of spots, but these are also ideal for times when you want to conceal a blemish without makeup.

PRO They come in a reusable box, with a mirror – trés chic!
CON Less effective on big spots.

Best value for money

Hero Cosmetics Mighty Patch Original Spot Patches, £7.99



If, like us, you're a fan of spot popping and de-gunking videos, the way these patches extract all the pus makes them oh-so satisfying – and ideal for a gentle but effective daytime treatment.

PRO 24 patches per pack, for under a tenner? Yes, please!
CON They can take up to eight hours to show results.

PHOTOGRAPHY: STARFACE, GETTY





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makeup



Insider tricks and tips to elevate your makeup game

PHOTOGRAPHY: LINDSAY ELLARY. MAKEUP: DEANNA MELLUSO AT FORWARD ARTISTS USING ESSENCE COSMETICS AND CATRICE COSMETICS. HAIR STYLIST: ERIN PIPER HERSCHLEB AT TRACEY MATTINGLY. MODEL: TEHYA ELAM AT FREEDOM MODELS. TEHYA WEARS: EARRINGS, SANDRA ALEXANDRA. TOP, CASABLANCA

Ace your base

The only fundamentals you need for the perfect base, no matter your skin type

WORDS: KEEKS REID



Prep
Long-lasting flawless foundation placement starts way before you even apply primer to your skin. Yep, all roads lead back to your skincare routine. No matter your skin type or texture, hydrated skin means that your layers of foundation have a good base to sit on and will stop things like separation and flaking. After cleansing, opt for a hydrating moisturiser or moisturising SPF, massaging into the skin until fully absorbed. This not only limits the potential for pilling (when your product balls up on the surface), but also warms your skin up for your primer and foundation to melt in seamlessly.

Prime
Now your skin is looking and feeling plumped and hydrated, it's time to prep. 'I am very intentional with primer placement,' says pro makeup artist Bernicia Boateng. 'I use the Estée Lauder Double Wear Smooth & Blur Primer (£39) only on the T-zone. That is where I want control and soft focus. I like creating contrast in texture, so the centre of the face is refined and blurred, while the outer areas remain fresh and gleaming.'

The type of primer you opt for will depend on two factors: your skin type and/or the finish of your foundation. If you have oily skin, look out for primers that use words like 'balancing', 'shine control' and 'oil-free'. For dry skin, words such as 'luminous', 'glow' and 'hydrating' will be used. And then for your finish, simply opt for 'matte' for less shine or 'dewy' for a more natural look.

Apply
While your priming is all about preparing for the best look, your foundation application is where you can make or break it. The first thing you need to think about is the type of texture and appearance you want. Often, these give different levels of coverage, but most can be adapted for your chosen look.

FOUNDATION TYPES

Six of the best formulas across every format, coverage level and finish to help you find your ultimate second-skin fit



BEST SKIN TINT

Danessa Myricks Beauty Yummy Skin Serum Skin Tint, £42.50

Lightweight and often infused with active ingredients, tints or tinted moisturisers are a simplified hybrid skincare routine and ideal for those who prefer the 'no-makeup' look.



BEST BB CREAM

Maybelline Fit Me Nude BB Cream, £8.99

Another lightweight and sheer pigmented base, BB stands for 'beauty balm' or 'blemish balm' and offers similar coverage to a tinted moisturiser, while also nourishing and protecting the delicate skin on your face.



BEST CC CREAM

IT Cosmetics Your Skin But Better CC+ Cream, £16

Still on the sheer pigment side of foundation formulas, CC stands for 'colour correcting', so these will even out skin tones and offer a lightweight way to cover and correct pigmentation and redness.

BEST POWDER

MAC Cosmetics Studio Fix Powder Plus Foundation, £32



Oily queens will love a powder formula, thanks to its ability to cover and set in one go. If you have dry skin, it's a texture to avoid.



BEST LIQUID

Estée Lauder Double Wear Stay-In-Place Makeup, £39.50

The most universal type of foundation, this texture suits everyone and is the easiest to build up and sheer down for custom coverage. Available in many different finishes from matte to glowy.



BEST STICK

Dior Forever Skin Perfect Foundation Stick, £48

Super travel-friendly, this type of foundation typically lends itself to drier and older skin types looking for medium to full coverage. The texture blends well but sits on the fuller side of the spectrum.

Application methods

Now that you know what type of foundation you want to use, let's talk about how to apply it. From brushes to sponges or your fingertips, there are so many options and you'll need to discover what works best for you. Most makeup artists like to use their hands to warm up the skin with prep and prime, and then go in with a brush for foundation and concealer.

'I use a quilted buffing brush to apply foundation, rather than a sponge,' says Boateng. 'The quilted fibres distribute the product evenly across the skin and give a seamless, uniform finish. It allows the foundation to look polished and perfected, without appearing heavy.' For her, the trick is about where you place the foundation, too. Avoid going in with product all over your face and, instead, start with a little, before gradually adding more, to get a more flawless look as a result. 'I build in thin layers and focus coverage only where needed. Because the brush gives such an even veil of product, the skin looks consistent and refined while still feeling like skin.'

Set

The final step to your flawless base is of course sealing it in. Even if you aren't looking for your products to last 12 hours-plus, setting can help with calming down oil production on greasier skin types and stopping separation on areas such as your chin, under your eyes and around your nose.

When it comes to using setting products, Boateng says, 'Placement and restraint are more important than quantity.' For the most natural look, she recommends focusing on priming properly rather than setting with powder all over, concentrating the powder only on your T-zone. 'I avoid over-powdering because I want the outer parts of the face to maintain luminosity.' Then finish with a 'light mist of setting spray at the end to help fuse everything together, so the finish looks skin-like, rather than layered'.

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY



The most long-lasting makeup of all time

Through sweat, snacks and questionable life choices, these formulas won't budge

WORDS: KEEKS REID AND LIA MAPPOURA

Some makeup fades faster than a holiday romance. Other formulas? They're in it for the long haul – the 14-hour shift, the afterparty, the Maccy D's nuggets and the Uber home. This is the glam that grafts. So, if you want your face to stay exactly where you left it, consider this your endurance edit.



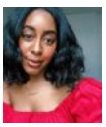
MORPHE BI-LINER DUAL-ENDED GEL LINERS, £14



Lia says...
'One end is a creamy gel pencil that glides on without dragging; the other is a precision liquid tip for definition. It sets down fast and genuinely stays put – no panda eyes by 3pm. Soft and smudgy when you want it, forensic and feline when you need it.'



REFY BROW SCULPT, £20



Keeks says...
'No need for microblading over here, this wax sets brows and they do not budge. Just one swipe through and then pat down to fix – if you use too much, you will be at risk of a little flaking. I promise, no matter what the weather throws at you, you won't have a brow hair out of place.'



MAKEUP BY MARIO SURREALSKIN SOFT BLUR SETTING POWDER, £38

Keeks says...
'I swear by this powder for the best enhanced setting. When I need a full 16-hour-plus kind of look, I reach for this and then set with my Charlotte Tilbury spray. But on a day-to-day basis, this powder is more than enough. I use a soft, flat brush and dust around my undereyes, T-zone and chin.'



MILK MAKEUP COOLING WATER JELLY TINT, £23

Lia says...
'This tint for your lips and cheeks gives you the best of both worlds: a juscy finish that melts into a long-lasting stain. It feels lightweight and hydrating on the lips, delivering a fresh wash of colour that won't smudge or fade. Swipe it on once for a sheer tint or layer it up for more impact.'



VIOLETTE_FR PETAL MATTE LIQUID LIPSTICK, £32

Keeks says...
'I hate having to constantly check my lip when I'm wearing anything other than nude, and this liquid lipstick is the only bright shade I trust to not move about my face throughout the day. You could mainline a BLT baguette for lunch and still have a flawless French lip.'



ESTÉE LAUDER DOUBLE WEAR LONGWEAR MATTE FOUNDATION, £39.50

Lia says...
'While the coverage is elite, the wear is this foundation's USP. Over a few weeks of testing, the longest I wore it for was 14 hours... 'twas a long day. And while it showed in my demeanour, it didn't show on my face. My foundation was more or less intact at the end of the day and shine was controlled.'



CHARLOTTE TILBURY AIRBRUSH FLAWLESS SETTING SPRAY MATTE, £21

Keeks says...
'It mists on seamlessly with no big droplets and sets down well, leaving a satin matte finish. I first put it to the test after doing a day at work, before whacking on more makeup and heading out. I applied a full coverage base before locking it in with this spritz. It lasted all night and didn't look cakey.'



DANESSA MYRICKS YUMMY SKIN BLURRING BALM POWDER, £42.50

Keeks says...
'The best way to use this for all-day flawlessness is as a primer, but it can be used as a setting balm, a highlighter or even a contour balm, too, when you pick up a deeper shade. I love the universal shade, but if you like super-full coverage, then a tinted shade is perfect.'



ESSENCE JELLY GRIP HYDRATING PRIMER, £3.99

Lia says...
'At £3.99, this primer is proof that you don't need to always splurge on products to get makeup that clings on like it pays rent. I press it in with my fingertips, wait 30 seconds, then go in with concealer, tint or foundation. The difference is immediate: smoother application, better hold, less midday drift.'



HUDA BEAUTY LIP CONTOUR STAIN, £22

Keeks says...
'There was much furore about this pen when it hit the store, with some shoppers unimpressed by the "inconsistency" of the payoff (the trick is to store it upside down). But it has quickly become one of my ride-or-die, long-lasting lip buys. I hate to do any kind of lip without a lip liner – and this stays put all day.'

PHOTOGRAPHY: ADRIANNA FAVERO/GALLERY STOCK



A wash of colour

PSA: the sun is calling for you to reject boring beauty this summer. Let your skin shine and your makeup bag bring the biggest trends of the season...

PHOTOGRAPHY: LINDSAY ELLARY
SENIOR FASHION EDITOR: REBECCA JANE HILL
BEAUTY DIRECTOR: KEEKS REID



Metallic tones

Sunrays shouldn't be the only thing sparkling on pool days. Metallics were seen all over the S/S 26 catwalks for good reason – they add a touch of unexpected glitz to a pretty pared-back season. Whether gold, silver or chrome, playing with sheen is the key to a fresh look.

Catrice Cosmetics Glass Like Highlighter Stick in 010 Keep It Glassy, £4.79. essence Cosmetics Baby Got Diamond Highlighter Stick, £3.49

Bikini, Tropic of C x Victoria's Secret. Earrings, Briwok Jewellery. Necklace (top), Hera. Necklace (bottom), Swarovski



Ghost lashes
Let's be honest, faffing around with mascara wands on the beach is very unnecessary, so embracing the red carpet's most unexpected beauty trend is easier and more chic. Say goodbye to lashings of thick formulas and hello to a nourishing lash serum and a little lip balm.

essence Cosmetics Lash & Brow Gel Mascara, £1.99. essence Cosmetics Bright Eyes! Under Eye Stick in 01 Soft Rose, £3.49

Bikini, Triangl. Hat, Eilish Studio. Ring, Pandora



New nudes

The 1990s called and apparently the decade's fave nude lip combo is having a welcome resurgence. Matte and cool-toned brown and beige hues, with just the faintest hint of pink in the centre, ensure it's more my-lips-but-better than the Noughties' concealer lips era. Shudders...

Catrice Cosmetics Gel Glide Long-Lasting Lip Liner in 060 Deep Talk, £2.49. essence Cosmetics Blur Soufflé Matte Lip Cream in 03 Hot Offline, £3.29. essence Cosmetics What A Tint! Lip & Cheek Tint in 01 Kiss From A Rose, £3.29

Shirt, Tory Burch. Bikini, Skims. Necklace, Briwok Jewellery. Ring (right hand); gold ring (left hand), both Pandora. Enamel ring (left hand), Anna + Nina





In the pink

One-and-done makeup and summer just go so well together, don't you think? So, pick your player and go all in for your eyes, lips and cheeks. The summer 2026 catwalks embraced pink in the prettiest, most ethereal way, so a touch of low-key iridescence and shimmer is most welcome here.

essence Cosmetics Soft Baked Blush in 010 Soft Bloom, £2.99. essence Cosmetics Baby Got Glow Highlighter Stick in 10 Golden Aura, £3.49. Catrice Cosmetics Diamond Treasures Cream To Powder Eyeshadow in Fairy Dust, £3.99

Dress, Missoni. Earrings, Sandralexandra

Model: Tehya Elam at Freedom Models. Makeup: Deanna Melluso at Forward Artists using essence Cosmetics and Catrice Cosmetics. Hair: Erin Piper Herschleb at Tracey Mattingly. Global editorial and brand director: Chloe O'Brien. Bookings director: Sophie Leen. Fashion assistant: Angel Cordova-Todd. Photography assistant: Lexi Wimberly. Photography support: Zarie Herman. Location: Windjammer Landing Resort and Residences, Saint Lucia (@windjammerlanding). With thanks to Saint Lucia Tourism Authority

The ultimate beauty

Stipple, buff, blend and diffuse product with accuracy to level up your makeup game

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

LIQUID AND CREAM

These brushes are made with dense and often synthetic bristles that don't absorb wet formulas, allowing liquids to be buffed on to skin smoothly and evenly.



1. Real Techniques Miracle Complexion Sponge, £7
2. Morphe M362 Pointed Eyeliner Brush, £8
3. Huda Beauty Undereye Buff Brush, £19
4. ByJoyadenuga 011 The Big Foundation Helper, £25

HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRUSHES

REPLACE YOUR SET AS NEEDED

While makeup brushes can be cleaned and reused over and over again, be smart when it comes to replacements. If it's been a couple of years and your set is looking a little worse for wear, invest in some new tools.

brush Venn diagram

MULTITASKING HEROES

The best of both worlds, these can be used to pick up dry product or glide over wet formulas, making them versatile for blending and building coverage.

POWDER

With fluffy or loosely packed bristles that help blend and soften pigment, these are designed to pick up dry product and diffuse it with ease.



5. Mac Small Angle 263 Eyeliner and Brow Brush, £16.50
6. Refy Duo Brush, £20
7. Vieve 225 Precise Eyeshadow Packer Brush, £22

8. Zoeva 227 Eyeshadow Blender Brush, £16.50
9. Morphe M164 Small Pointed Powder Brush, £12
10. Spectrum Collections Pantherine A68 Large Angled Powder Makeup Brush, £11.99
11. Sephora Collection Powder Puff, £10.99

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDY PARSONS

WASH REGULARLY

To avoid trapped oil and bacteria, makeup brushes should be washed weekly. Use a targeted brush cleaning solution such as Isoclean Makeup Brush Cleaner or a gentle cleanser and rinse thoroughly.

DRY PROPERLY

Lay brushes flat or angled downwards so that water doesn't loosen the glue in the handle. Never shortcut this process with a hairdryer; heat can damage and/or misshape bristles.





PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

The makeup products that won't make your acne worse – promise

Tried, tested and vetted, with expert insight from Dr Leah Totton

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

'Was it you?!' I say, eyeing my foundation with suspicion after yet another breakout. Cue the dramatic swearing-off of makeup altogether, the frantic ingredient-label googling and the inevitable vow that I'll let my skin 'breathe'.

If you've ever blamed your base for a sudden crop of spots, welcome – you're in good company. For those of us with acne-prone skin, makeup can feel like a necessary evil: confidence boosting on one hand, a pore-clogging saboteur on the other.

The line between looking put together and waking up to an angry chin situation can feel perilously thin. But here's the plot twist: wearing makeup doesn't automatically subject you to breakouts. According to medical doctor and cosmetic specialist Leah Totton, founder of Dr Leah Skin Clinics, it's more about the ingredients – plus how you apply and remove it – that determines whether your skin behaves or throws a tantrum.

The good news? You don't need to break up with foundation, concealer or blush. You just need to be more selective about the brands and formulas you're using. So, here's the expert intel to know, plus acne-friendly makeup that won't sabotage your skin.

Can makeup actually cause acne?

First things first, a debunking: 'Makeup in general does not always worsen acne,' explains Dr Totton. 'It's more the ingredients, application and removal habits that can aggravate or exacerbate acne for those with acne-prone skin.'

In other words, all foundation isn't inherently evil – but some formulas definitely behave better than others. Heavy, pore-clogging textures paired with lazy (read: makeup wipes) removal? That's where the trouble starts.

The ingredients that can trigger breakouts

If you've ever scanned the back of a product, wondering exactly which ingredients you're meant to avoid, Dr Totton breaks it down simply.

'Certain ingredients in makeup can have a negative impact on acne-prone skin and result in pores becoming clogged.' All skin is different, and so ingredients won't always have the same impact; however, Dr Totton says, 'Typically, comedogenic oils, such as lanolin, can clog the pores and trigger breakouts.'

Alcohols can also be sneaky offenders. While they may make products feel lighter or more matte initially, Dr Totton says that alcohols, such as ethyl or isopropyl, can strip the skin, disrupt the barrier and cause inflammation. Then there's fragrance. Artificial fragrances are a common irritant, especially for sensitive or acne-prone skin.

'It's very much a case of learning to understand what ingredients and habits work for your specific skin type,' explains Dr Totton. 'For some people, one particular makeup product or ingredient may exacerbate their acne, whilst for others it won't.'

Eliminating known aggressors is a smart starting point. Look for products labelled non-comedogenic – meaning they've been formulated specifically not to clog pores (comedones are the tiny blockages that turn into blackheads, whiteheads and spots). Focus on oil-free and fragrance-free formulas where possible, and you'll begin to notice a real difference in your complexion.

YOUR BREAKOUT BLOCKING LINE-UP

After trialling, testing and scrutinising ingredient lists, these are the makeup products that play nicely with acne-prone skin



BEST SKIN TINT...

Clinique Anti-Blemish Solutions Liquid Makeup, £37.50

Infused with salicylic acid, this oil-free foundation protects from blemishes and breakouts.



BEST BRONZER...

Makeup By Mario Soft Sculpt Bronzer, £32

Makeup By Mario's bronzer is formulated not only to blur skin but also to blend easily without clogging pores.



BEST FOUNDATION...

Maybelline Fit Me Matte + Poreless Foundation, £9.99

Dermatologist-tested. Allergy-tested. Non-comedogenic. This pore-minimising foundation ticks all the boxes.



BEST BLUSH...

Kiko Milano Unlimited Blush, £11.49

While this blush does have oil-derived ingredients in it, the formula overall is non-comedogenic, making it a great option for breakout-prone skin.



BEST CONCEALER...

e.l.f. Hydrating Satin Camo Concealer, £8

This concealer is oil-free, non-comedogenic and vegan, but doesn't compromise on hydration.



BEST HIGHLIGHTER...

Fenty Beauty Killawatt Freestyle Highlighter Duo, £32

Glowing skin doesn't have to equal shine... or worse, grease. Fenty Beauty's Killawatt keeps skin lit beyond sundown without that heavy feeling.



BEST POWDER...

Laura Mercier Translucent Loose Setting Powder, £38.50

A great powder can be hard to come by; that's why Laura Mercier's is my failsafe. It won't clog pores and is suitable for all skin types.



BEST BROW PENCIL...

UKLash Brow Pencil, £13

Most brow pencils are safe to use on acne-prone skin; however, UKLash's creamy formula is our fave.



BEST CLEANSER...

Cetaphil Gentle Exfoliating Salicylic Acid Cleanser, £14

Salicylic acid can be harsh on some skin, but Cetaphil's exfoliating cleanser is anything but.



BEST MAKE UP REMOVER...

Garnier Micellar Cleansing Water All-in-1, £8.99

Micellar water is the perfect makeup remover for those with oily skin. It's super gentle, and, as its name would suggest, water-based.

How to wear makeup without irritating your skin

Dr Totton recommends focusing on three key habits:

Choose the right formulas
Breathable textures that sit lightly on your skin (non-comedogenic, oil-free products) are less likely to clog pores, especially when it comes to base makeup.

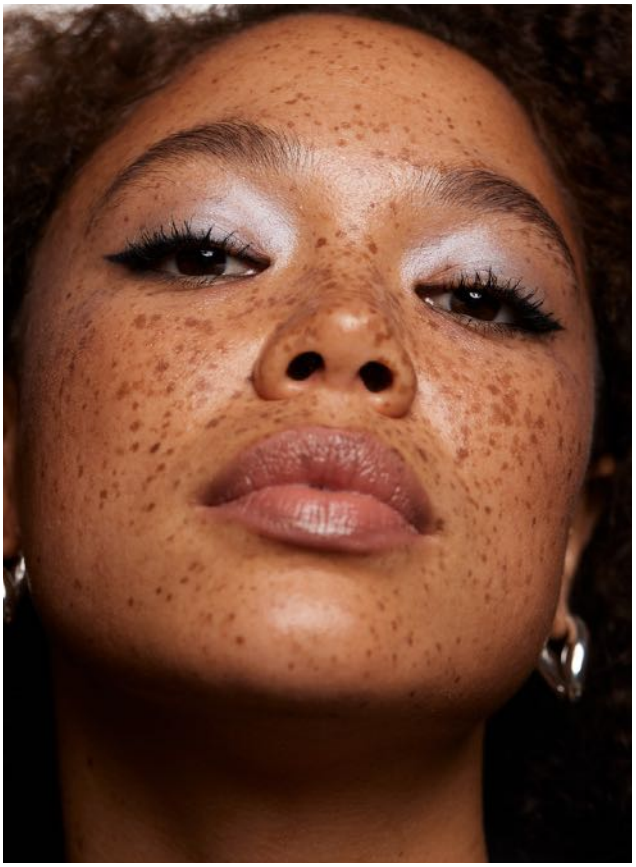
Clean your tools
Dirty brushes and sponges are playgrounds for bacteria. Regularly washing your tools helps prevent bacteria from being transferred on to your skin, which can otherwise contribute to breakouts.

Remove makeup properly (but gently)
Aggressive scrubbing can be just as damaging as not removing makeup at all. A thorough but gentle cleanse in the evening is essential to prevent pores from becoming congested overnight. Dr Totton also notes that supporting your skin beyond your bathroom shelf can make a big difference. 'Incorporating in-clinic treatments, such as an anti-acne, deep exfoliation and blackhead extraction facial (available at Dr Totton's clinics), into your skincare regime can support a healthy skin barrier and reduce the impact makeup will have.' That, alongside healthy lifestyle habits, will make your skin more resilient overall.

If you are suffering from persistent acne and feel you have exhausted all options, always see your GP or a professional dermatologist. Sometimes, the solution goes beyond over-the-counter skincare and makeup products.

COSMOPOLITAN CLUB COSMO

Scan the QR code to win one of five Cetaphil cleansing bundles



Your ultimate five-minute makeup routine, sorted

In a time crunch? These tips, tricks and multitasking formulas create a full face with just five products

WORDS: URMI PANDIT

I love slow, relaxed mornings where I get to paint my face in peace. But when life, travel or snoozed alarms leave me with raised blood pressure and just five minutes to look alive, this faff-free, express makeup routine comes in clutch. Featuring only five products (plus timestamps for proof!), here's how to look glossy, on the go...



TIME CHECK: 00m45s

STEP 1 Barely-there base

NYX PROFESSIONAL MAKEUP BARE WITH ME CONCEALER SERUM, £9.99

Athina Ioannidou, pro team member at Sephora, says 'texture over coverage, glow over perfection and enhancement over transformation' is the motto for a speedy base. Apply two to three dots under the eyes, around the nose and a little extra on any blemishes. Blend with your finger for a natural-looking radiance.



TIME CHECK: 02m15s

STEP 2 Triple threat

MERIT FLUSH BALM IN FOX, £26

Few products multitask as much as this ultra-blendable blush. Cream textures are easily swiped over the lips and eyelids to triple up as a lip tint and shadow. This warm taupe shade flatters all skin tones and acts as a 'blonzer', creating both a sunkissed glow and an illusion of being put together.



TIME CHECK: 03m15s

STEP 3 Layers on layers

HOURGLASS AMBIENT LIGHTING PALETTE SUBLIME EDIT, £68

'While cream products are the easiest to work with, they're not the most long-lasting,' says makeup artist Zoë Taylor – so layering powders on top will enhance their wear time. This blusher, bronzer and finishing powder trio has blurring pigments for subtle highlights. Use gentle motions with a fluffy brush to set the cream and liquids in place.



TIME CHECK: 04m45s

STEP 4 Double up

TRINNY LONDON LASH2BROW, £30

Ioannidou warns not to overlook styling your brows, as 10 seconds with a tinted brow gel is enough to noticeably frame the face. My go-to is this dual-ended hero from Trinny London – especially because when you flip it around, a smudge-free mascara with seriously impressive lengthening abilities appears, as if by magic.



TIME CHECK: 05m00s

STEP 5 Spritz to finish

SAIE CITYSET LIGHTWEIGHT SETTING SPRAY, £30

Yes, the routine takes minutes, but you want the results to last. Enter Saie's light-as-air (and just as refreshing) setting spray – infused with hydrolysed corn starch and humectants for fade-proofing, hydrating and blurring your base in a matter of spritzes.

PHOTOGRAPHY: SARAH LAUREN HOLT/GALLERY STOCK

Come correct!

Correcting? Knowing your undertone? It's just colour theory... but for your face

WORDS: KEEKS REID



When you're pressed for time as it is, colour correcting might feel like a step too far. I was perplexed when a makeup artist first suggested that I try it – Picasso I am not. But trusting their expertise on this was one of the best things I have ever done for my makeup application, and I now never do my makeup without it. Why? Before I used colour correctors, I was always masking my dark circles or hyperpigmentation, but with colour correction, I'm cancelling them out completely. As expert makeup artist Aditya Madiraju says, 'Colour theory is the study of how colours interact and are perceived by the human eye.' And so, with colour correcting you apply the same principle. 'The colour wheel [you remember, the big colourful thing that was hung up in your GCSE art classroom] is used as the basis of colour theory, as it shows how colours either harmonise or complement each other, or how they can clash.' Whether you're looking to cancel out redness, acne scars, dark circles or uneven skin tone, there's a colour corrector to help you.

Where to start

GREEN
Opposite to red on the colour wheel, green-based correctors are great for hiding a flushed face or a super-irritated breakout.

PEACH AND ORANGE
Depending on how deep your skin tone is, peachy to orangey colour correctors work perfectly to cancel out blue and brown dark circles and uneven pigmentation.

PURPLE AND BLUE
Sallow-looking yellowy skin can be easily brightened with blue and purple correctors. A light layer of this can do wonders for luminosity.



PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

How to apply

'Start by applying a light wash of colour corrector,' says Dominic Skinner, director of makeup artistry at MAC makeup. 'You can add a little more to any part that is still looking dark. Once you've applied the colour corrector, set it with a little powder before applying your concealer or foundation.' Make sure you let it set before you apply your base products so you don't lift the corrector.

To control how much colour corrector and concealer you're applying, Aditya suggests applying it on to the back of your hand first before blending it on to your skin with a fluffy brush. 'This method helps prevent over-application, which is especially useful for those with fine lines and wrinkles. Excess product is the main reason for creasing, so using less ensures a smoother, more natural finish,' says Aditya.

Knowing your undertone

For truly A* makeup application, knowing your undertone will go a long way to a seamless look. 'Your skin tone is the surface colour of your skin,' explains global pro Bobbi Brown artist Amy Conway. 'It's what you'd describe as fair, light, medium, tan or deep.' Your undertone, on the other hand, is the subtle hue that sits beneath the surface; it can be warm, cool or neutral. Amy describes it perfectly: 'Think of skin tone as the canvas and undertone as the filter over it. Two people can have the same skin tone but completely different undertones and, therefore, wear totally different makeup shades.'

This is different from colour correcting, as your undertone doesn't change, even when your skin catches the sun, whereas how you colour correct will vary as you experience dark circles, redness and so on.

Once you know your undertone, shopping for a foundation will be much easier. Many brands label their foundation shades with 'W' for warm and 'C' for cool (such as MAC) and most use undertones in their shade description.

How to match your undertone

'As a makeup artist, I like to determine everything by looking and assessing the skin in natural daylight,' says Amy. 'I'll swipe a warm and a cool foundation from the cheekbone to the jawline – the tone that disappears is your match.'

If you can't make it to a counter to get help with this from a pro, you can do it at home. 'Look at how your skin naturally flushes,' says Amy. 'Pinch your cheek or observe from the apples of your cheeks to your ears. Pink or red tones indicate a cool undertone, while peach or golden tones reveal a warm undertone.' Another trick is to look at the colour of the veins in your wrist. If your veins appear greenish, you have a warmer undertone, while blue veins suggest you have a cooler one.

YOUR CORRECTOR CURATION

The ones that Team *Cosmo* swear by!



BEST UNDER-EYE CORRECTOR
Bobbi Brown Corrector, £29.50



BEST SERUM FORMULA
Erborian Centella Red Sérum, £30



BEST PALETTE
Essence Conceal Like A Pro Colour Correcting Palette, £3.40



BEST CREAM CONSISTENCY
MAC Studio Fix 24HR Colour Corrector, £18



BEST FOR REDNESS
Dr.Jart+ Cicapair Soothing Color Correcting Treatment SPF30 30ml, £29

Beauty lab

Makeup sticks

These may look simple, but they're some of the hardest-working formulas on the market

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

If your makeup routine needs streamlining, sticks are where it's at! From foundation and contour to blush and highlighter, these swipe-and-go formulas are designed to be easy to use, effortless to blend and perfect for applying exactly where you need them.



BARE MINERALS COMPLEXION RESCUE LUMINOUS SKIN TINT STICK, £33.50

After a natural-looking skin tint with super-fast application? Look no further...

- Hydrating and luminous – think: foundation but with skincare benefits
- Provides light to buildable coverage
- Sweat-, humidity- and waterproof



CATRICE BLUSHIN' CHARM MULTI STICK, £4.79

Glide across your cheeks and/or lips; blend with your fingers for a natural finish.

- Budget-friendly!
- Has buildable pigment – from diffused flush to bold colour
- Creamy, blendable texture
- Enriched with castor oil and vitamin E for a nourishing feel



L'ORÉAL PARIS LUMI LES GLASS STICKS, £11.99

Glossy, glazed-doughnut skin is the goal with this stick – no glitter, no fuss; just natural glow!

- Place on high points of the face for a catch-the-light sheen
- Lightweight, non-sticky formula feels comfortable on skin
- Versatile! Can be used on the brow bone, cupid's bow or décolletage

ICONIC LONDON SHAPE AND SHADE SCULPTING STICK, £23

Add natural definition with a few swipes in the hollows of the cheeks, across the forehead and on the jawline and sides of the nose.

- Self-setting formula transforms from cream to powder-like finish
- Easy to blend – no harsh contour lines here, folks!
- Adds warmth as well as definition
- Works well on bare skin and layered over foundation





ILIA SKIN REWIND COMPLEXION STICK, £48

This full coverage foundation stick gives a filtered, skin-perfected finish with customisable coverage.

- Best blended with a brush or sponge
- Medium-to-buildable coverage, depending on your desired look
- Super long-wear, airbrushed finish without liquid mess
- Up to 42 shades for inclusive matching

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANDY PARSONS

Introducing Hollywood's best-kept secret: the press-on nail

Who says a salon-worthy mani has to break the bank?

WORDS: URMI PANDIT

Nothing beats the feeling of a fresh set of nails… apart from maybe the price tag. Lucky for us, DIY manicures have come a long way, and modern press-ons are giving salon sets a run for their money. Ahead, we test four of the most popular offerings.



Beauty director Keeks says:
If you have small nail beds, this range from Elegant Touch is perfect for you. There is a good range of colours from poppy reds to raven blacks, so if you need a gel-look in a jif, look no further.

Elegant Touch Gel Finish in Pillarbox Red, £5



Beauty assistant Urmi says:
OPI is known for its 10/10 nail polishes, but the press-ons deserve some love, too (mine have lasted almost three weeks!). Not only is this deep wine colour so classy, each nail has a glossy shine, so it looks freshly painted rather than glued on.

OPI xPress/On in Malaga Wine, £12



***Cosmo* US beauty editor Beth says:**
These cult-favourite press-ons are on the thinner side, which makes them really easy to mould to my nail beds. TBH, the included nail glue isn't as strong as others I've tried, but with stronger glue, I can get a few extra days of wear.

Kiss Salon Acrylic French Nude Collection in Leilani, £7.99



Freelance beauty writer Elena says:
I'm obsessed with this tortoiseshell design – forget trying to emulate salon acrylics, these look like perfect, natural nails with spenny nail art. They stick on so securely and have a refined, elegant shape.

Nails.Inc Shellfie Ready Artificial Nails in Tortoiseshell, £9



Nails.Inc's founder Thea Green gives us the 101 on press-ons…

How can you make press-ons last as long as possible?
'Longevity starts with prep (push back the cuticles, lightly buff and cleanse nails to remove oils), and choosing the correct size for each nail. For glue, look for professional-grade formulas: those infused with vitamin E or panthenol will feel secure but gentle.'

Are they safe for nails?
'Hygiene matters, since trapped moisture under a lifting nail can lead to bacteria. If a press-on starts to lift, gently remove: soak the nails in warm, soapy water or an acetone-based remover and let the glue loosen naturally before easing them off (never peel).'

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

THE

COSMOPOLITAN x Boots

NEW SEASON BEAUTY EDIT

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body



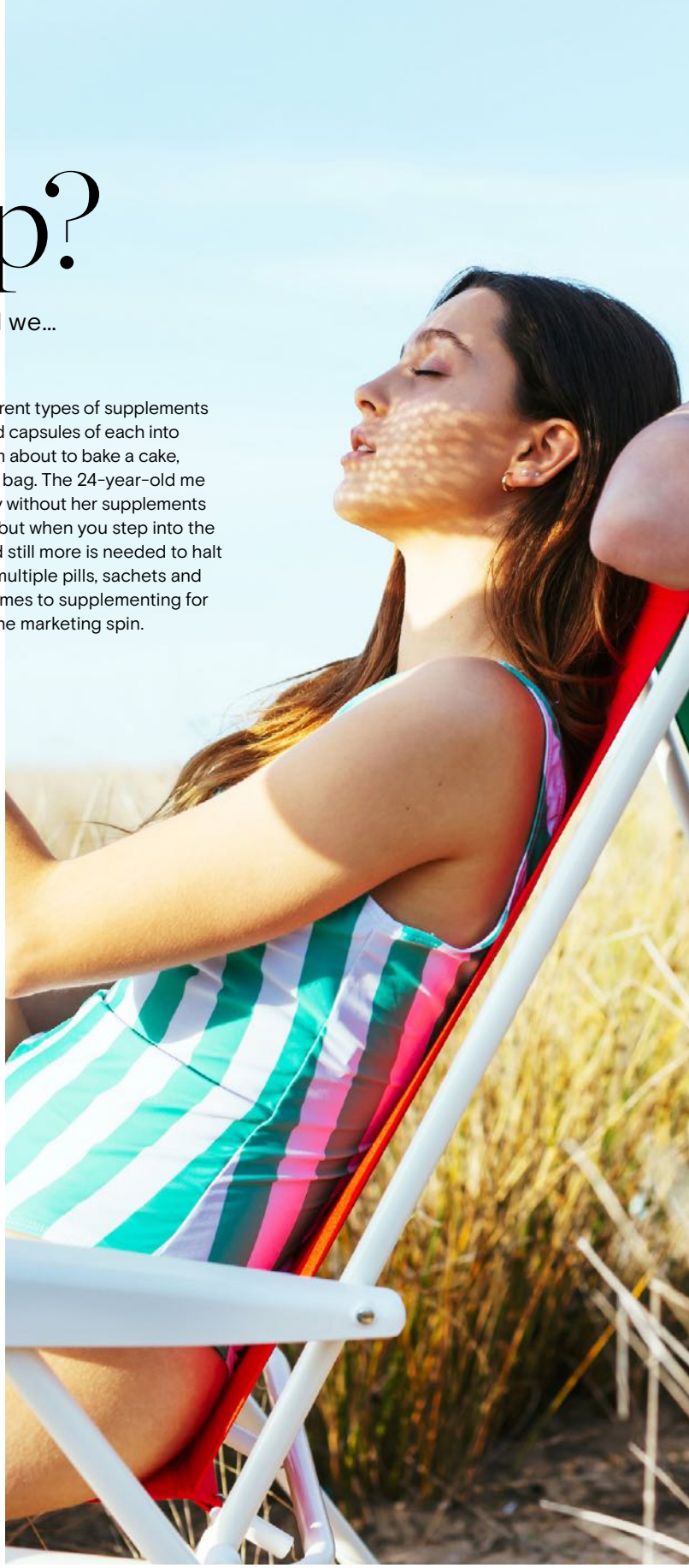
Your neck, your back… you know the drill. Below-the-face body care, sorted

PHOTOGRAPHY: LINDSAY ELLARY. MAKEUP: DEANNA MELLUSO AT FORWARD ARTISTS USING ESSENCE COSMETICS AND CATRICE COSMETICS. HAIR STYLIST: ERIN PIPER HERSCHLEB AT TRACEY MATTINGLY. MODEL: TEHYA ELAM AT FREEDOM MODELS. WEARING: BIKINI, SKIMS. NECKLACE, BRIWOK. RINGS, PANDORA

What supp?

Let's demystify the supplements aisle, shall we...

WORDS: KEEKS REID



I'm packing for a trip – just overnight – and I have seven different types of supplements strewn in front of me. I pop and pour one, two, three pills and capsules of each into my hands to pack into my pill box. I level out powders like I'm about to bake a cake, and then I stuff a few packs of electrolytes into my makeup bag. The 24-year-old me wouldn't recognise this 34-year-old woman who can't go one day without her supplements lest she shrivel up like a raisin. That wouldn't happen, of course, but when you step into the world of supplementing you start to believe that more, more and still more is needed to halt signs of ageing, give you better kip and shiny hair. But is taking multiple pills, sachets and powders a day necessary? Is there a saturation point when it comes to supplementing for your beauty goals? We spoke to an expert to sift the fact from the marketing spin.

The low-down

The first thing to note is that you should be starting from a good base, diet-wise. Supplements cannot replace the effects of a balanced diet. They are there to support you day-to-day, not do all the heavy-lifting, so if you are having any issues with your diet or health, speak to a GP before you add anything to your online basket. 'Most people should be able to get most of the nutrients their body needs by having a healthy, balanced diet,' says Vicky Pennington, nutritionist at Boots. 'A balanced diet is the foundation, but if your routine could use a little extra support, a targeted supplement could help. Rather than focusing on one hero ingredient, it's usually about supporting your body consistently over time.'

The NHS advises people in the UK to consider taking a vitamin D supplement during autumn and winter, due to a lack of sunlight and it being difficult to get the right levels from food. Aside from this – and happily for me and my pill box – when it comes to supplementing, there's no one-size-fits-all. 'To support and maintain healthy-looking skin, hair and nails, we should be looking towards a wide mix of everyday nutrients,' advises Pennington. Alongside beauty supplements like biotin and collagen, she says that 'minerals such as zinc and selenium help to support normal hair and nails, while copper can help contribute to normal hair and skin pigmentation.'

There is a lot of conversation around collagen, an ever-booming part of the supplement industry, but there is also a lot of misinformation to match. Most collagen supplements use hydrolysed collagen and are either bovine or marine collagen. They are 'absorbed in the gut and transported in the bloodstream in the form of peptides and amino acids,' says Pennington. But among the myths, one thing that often gets overlooked is that it works better when paired. 'It's worth remembering that vitamin C supports normal collagen



PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

formation and plays an important role in the healthy function of skin,' says Pennington. 'Vitamin C is crucial because collagen, the protein that supports skin, can't do its job without it. You should start with a wide variety of fruit and vegetables in your diet, but a supplement can help fill any gaps.'

Though frustrating, you really do need to be consistent with your supplements to see an improvement, and so it's crucial that you weigh up how much you can invest for a sustained time – costs can quickly rack up! 'Supplements are not a quick fix, so patience and regularity matter,' warns Pennington. 'While everyone is different, many people choose to take a supplement daily for around one to three months before deciding how it fits into their routine. Factors such as your diet, lifestyle and overall health can all influence how quickly you notice any changes.'

I've also found that introducing new supplements into my routine gradually works best. Similarly to applying skincare, I can't tell what's actually working when I start a bunch of things at once. Pennington agrees: 'Small, gradual changes are more typical than dramatic shifts, so think of supplements as part of a longer-term approach to supporting skin health rather than an overnight solution.'

When you're not at optimum health, often your skin, hair and nails pay the price, and supplements can't replace a healthy lifestyle. 'A balanced and varied diet, along with a healthy lifestyle, should not be forgotten,' says Pennington. Nowadays, many supplements incorporate multiple vitamins and minerals into one for a layered approach to targeting beauty concerns. Check the nutritional information for percentages to ensure you're not over-indexing on the Nutrient Reference Values (NRV%), which is the daily intake recommendation for each vitamin (and always check with your GP, or a nutritionist, if you're unsure).

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HABI A Good Hair Day Biotin Gummies, £10 for 60



VITAMIN C
to support your collagen production

Vitabiotics Ultra Vitamin C, £6.15 for 60



MAGNESIUM
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Modern Chemistry Magnesium Bisglycinate 1692mg capsules, £10 for 60



MSM
for collagen, keratin and glutathione support

Oskia Msm Bio-Plus, £70 for 120 tablets



ELECTROLYTES
for better hydration

Proof Daily Electrolytes supplements, £23.99 for 20 sachets



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Your spring beauty wish list

Our feeds are bursting with weird and wonderful trending ingredients, so we asked Boots which hot arrivals should make the cut



If your FYP is anything like ours, you've been seeing a lot of skincare sorbets and products with ingredients lists that read like chemistry books lately. Social loves them, but are they actually any good? Since spring is the perfect time for a beauty reset, we've teamed up with the experts at Boots to uncover the products we believe are truly deserving of your time and cash. Our biggest discovery? You can find them all on its high-street shelves, as Boots is fast becoming the go-to for trending beauty brands.

First up, if you've been eyeing the near-flawless complexions of people on the salmon DNA bandwagon and thinking, 'Yes to the result; hell no to the fish factor', try the Hydrating PDRN Serum from the retailer's own line and you'll soon be a convert. Alongside the trending PDRN (polydeoxyribonucleotide – yes, we see why they abbreviated it), it's enriched with vitamin B5 to leave skin feeling hydrated. You'll also find PDRN in products like the Advanced Rejuvenating Cream from best-selling Korean brand Dr Reju-All. And speaking of K-beauty products available at Boots, it's worth mentioning Anua 3+ Azelaic Acid 3 + Cica Skin Clarifying Toner, which uses regenerative cica (aka tiger grass) to keep redness at bay.

Fans of skinimalism may prefer a more streamlined routine – and nothing does high-impact, low-effort better than a serum. Our favourites are packed with actives that target concerns like hyperpigmentation and uneven texture. The Inkey List's Starter Retinol Serum is a gentle way into the world of retinoids, aiming to help you achieve a smoother complexion.



Now the sun is here, daily SPF is a must – and even more so after retinol use. Let us introduce you to Bubble's Plus One Tinted Mineral Sunscreen — non-greasy, non-comedogenic and with no chalky white cast, it's ideal for most skin types.

Wondering if sorbet is legit skincare? The answer is yes – if it comes in the form of Garnier's niacinamide-enriched Vitamin C Hydrating Sorbet Cream. Its nourishing formula is lighter than a classic cream, so spring is the perfect time to try it.

Of course, a well-rounded routine isn't just about what you apply to your face. So as well as rotating products in and out of your bathroom cabinet, consider slipping some Marine Collagen Liquid Drinks into your regime, or ending the day with a post-cleansing swipe of one of Mediheal's Collagen Ampoule Pads to help nourish and hydrate your complexion before bed.

Should you find yourself stuck on what to choose based on your skin type, there's a team of experts on hand to help you navigate the aisles. Consider this your official excuse to 'pop to Boots' and leave with all the buys you've had your eye on.

Reset your spring beauty routine in-store or online at boots.com

Sniffing out fragrance families:

How to find the perfume for you

Finally! A relationship that actually lasts!

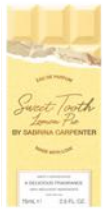
WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA



Finding your signature perfume can feel oddly high-stakes. And while a few spritzes in the perfume aisle may start off well, it soon transcends into a blur of scent – and probably a headache. The secret to escaping perfume purgatory? Understanding fragrance families and how perfumes are built. Once you know what your nose actually fancies – and how long a scent will last – picking a signature stops feeling like a personality crisis and starts feeling, well, fun!

Fragrance families, explained

Perfumes are grouped into families based on how they smell overall. And chances are, if you love one, you'll enjoy others like it.



SWEET & GOURMAND
Sabrina Carpenter Lemon Pie EDP, £39.99 for 75ml

Warm, cosy and often edible-smelling. Notes like vanilla, caramel, tonka bean and praline dominate, making these scents feel comforting and sensual. If you love dessert-like perfumes or anything that smells 'soft but sexy', this is your lane.



WOODY
L'Occitane Ambre EDP, £70 for 50ml

Richer and grounded, with notes like sandalwood, cedarwood, vetiver and oud. These scents can smell creamy, smoky or dry, and often feel more 'grown-up'. If you want something chic and less sweet, these are a safe bet.



MUSKY
Dedcool Xtra Milk EDP, £71 for 50ml

Modern musks are clean, soft and almost skin-like. They have an intimate vibe, perfect if you want a 'your skin but better' effect. Think subtle, addictive and easy to wear every day.



FRESH
Philosophy Amazing Grace Jasmine EDT, £39 for 60ml

Crisp, bright and uplifting. Expect citrus, green notes, watery accords and light florals. These scents feel clean and energising – ideal if you don't like anything too heavy or sweet. The trade-off? They usually don't last as long.



FLORAL
Issey Miyake Lumière d'Issey EDP, £140 for 100ml

Florals can range from green or powdery to floral-aldehyde, floral-fruity and gourmand compositions. Just like your favourite arrangement, this group is refreshing, light and airy.

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY



What are perfume 'notes'?

Perfume notes are the individual ingredients you smell – but they don't all appear at once. Instead, fragrance unfolds in layers.

Top notes are what you smell immediately after spraying. They're usually light and fresh (like citrus or herbs) and fade quickly.

Heart/middle notes appear once the top notes disappear. This is the main character of the perfume – often florals, spices or fruits.

Base notes are what linger for hours. These include vanilla, musk, woods and amber, and they're responsible for how long a perfume lasts on your skin.

This is why a perfume can smell totally different after an hour, and why it's worth living with a scent before committing. To do this, we recommend investing in a discovery kit – many of your favourite brands sell these, featuring mini versions of all their bestselling scents. Pick one up and you're guaranteed to find your next favourite (or four).



Jo Malone London Cologne Discovery Collection, £20 for 5 x 1.5ml

Eau de toilette vs parfum vs elixir

The main difference between perfume formats is concentration, which affects both strength and longevity.

Eau de toilette (EDT) is lighter and fresher, with a lower concentration of fragrance oils. It's great for daytime or warmer weather, but usually needs reapplying.

Eau de parfum (EDP) is more concentrated, richer and longer-lasting. If you want your scent to still be noticeable by dinner, this is usually the sweet spot.

Parfum or elixir versions are the most intense. They contain the highest concentration of fragrance oils, meaning they last the longest and often smell deeper and warmer. A little goes a long way – these are statement scents.

How to find your forever fragrance

Start by sniffing out (soz) what you already love. Are you loyal to vanilla-based body creams? Obsessed with fresh laundry smells? Weak at the knees for smoky candles? Those clues point directly to your fragrance family.

Always test perfumes on skin, give them time to settle, and don't rush the decision. Sure, blotters are great for initial impression (and every store has them), but they only tell half the story! The best fragrance isn't the one everyone else loves – it's the one you keep reaching for on autopilot. Once you know your fragrance family, the search becomes less like failed dates and more about falling in love. It's out there, you've just got to find it!

MAKE YOUR PERFUME LAST...

Emmanuelle Moeglin, founder and perfumer at Experimental Perfume Club, shares her expert tips

PREP YOUR SKIN

Perfume lasts longer when skin is moisturised, and Moeglin says that 'unscented, oil-based creams like jojoba or almond oil make great fixative bases'.

APPLY STRATEGICALLY

'Apply on warm areas like wrists, neck, behind the ears, or inside the elbows,' says Moeglin. 'These radiate heat, helping the fragrance diffuse throughout the day.' Aka, pulse points are the MVPs. But whatever you do, resist the urge to rub your wrists together! 'When you rub, you create heat that breaks the top notes and changes how the scent develops,' Moeglin says.

CARRY A TOP-UP

As the old adage goes: all good things must come to an end, and perfume is no exception. As with other beauty products, the bottom line when it comes to fragrance longevity is reapplication. Moeglin recommends reapplying after four to six hours to keep smelling fresh.

Fake it 'til you make it

Sunless tanning has never been easier, thanks to these glow-giving formulas and expert dos and don'ts

WORDS: URMI PANDIT

Self-tanning can be a tricky (read: streaky) business. Enter: our ultimate tanning guide, compiled with the help of leading tanning experts and bestselling brands. From clever maintenance tricks to Team *Cosmo*'s go-to tanners, here's how to achieve a truly DIY glow...

The best prep steps...

Prepping the skin is essential for a smooth, long-lasting tan. 'Wax or shave at least 48 hours beforehand to help the tan break down more evenly and prevent product buildup,' advises James Read, founder of Self Glow by James Read.

Facialist and tanning expert Michaella Bolder, recommends exfoliating with either an oil-free formula or gloves 24 hours prior to application. 'Then, apply an aloe vera-based moisturiser to any dry parts of the body (hands, feet, elbows and knees) to stop the tan from settling into these areas.'





Aveeno Skin Renewal Gentle Body Scrub, £9.99. Boots Exfoliating Gloves, £2

Now for application…
You can either apply your self-tanner in the morning for daytime development, or before bed to wake up bronzed. Either way, work from the top of your body down, using layers to achieve your desired coverage.

Always use a clean tanning mitt to avoid unwanted streaks, and apply a generous amount of product. 'Work in long, sweeping motions up and down, starting across the chest and down the arms,' explains Bolder. 'Add circular movements for the shoulders, underarms and torso.'

Read's pro tip for tanning your back? Just tie your mitt on to a wooden spoon. 'For the hands and feet, use only the leftover product on your mitt to create a subtle, natural finish and prevent heavy buildup,' says Read. 'And try not to wash your hands straight away – this will avoid the tell-tale "white hands, brown arms" look.'

Bolder adds that simple contouring using a tanner can give the illusion of definition on your arms. Two days after tanning, go back in with more product, this time using your mitt in long brush strokes. 'Going from just under your shoulder, down the back of the bicep and round to just above the elbow emulates muscle definition and creates a 3D effect.'

Self-tanners can take between an hour and eight hours to develop; look at the instructions on your product for guidance.

St. Tropez Tan Dual Sided Luxe Velvet Fake Tan Mitt, £6. Brushworks Tan Applicator Set, £11.99



Maintenance is key
Now that you've put the work in, you want the results to last. 'Re-apply every second or third day to maintain the glow, without going overboard,' says Bolder. A light exfoliation can also help to preserve the evenness of the tan and encourage a natural fade.

One of our pro's top tips for prolonging a tan? Hydration – both inside and out! 'Drink water and moisturise your skin with aloe vera every day', recommends Jules Von Hep, co-founder of Isle of Paradise. 'Hydrated skin will hold on to the colour of a tan for longer.'

And if you're tanning close to a holiday, try to avoid swimming or hot saunas straight away – these are the most common culprits for fading.



Vaseline Aloe Soothe Body Lotion, £4.50. The Body Shop Aloe Multi-Use Soothing Face & Body Gel, £16

Quick tricks for removal…
Von Hep recommends allowing a gradual, even fade. 'Slowly tease tan off the skin over the course of three days, with the last day being a deep scrub.'

There are tons of tan removers on the market, but actually, a spoonful of sugar can just do the trick, says Von Hep. 'Make sure to mix it in with your body wash, then each time you wash, a light layer of tan will come off.'

GET YOUR GLOW ON



BEST FOR A LONG-LASTING TAN
Bondi Sands Technocolor 1 Hour Express Self Tanning Foam, £19.99
This takes just 60 minutes to develop and lasts for a week. It's infused with jewel-inspired colour guides to counteract orange tones, so you'll get a seriously believable bronze.



BEST CUSTOMISABLE TAN
St. Tropez Self Tan Express Bronzing Mousse, £34
To achieve your perfect depth and intensity, look no further. With a non-sticky finish and a gentle formula for all skin types, this creamy mousse can be left on for up to three hours, and continues to develop.



BEST FOR BEGINNERS
Isle of Paradise Self-Tanning Water, £19
For any newbies, this spray bottle is easy to use and versatile (suitable for facial tanning, too). Mix a few drops into your body lotion for a seamless tan, thanks to its hydrating baobab.



BEST TANNING SERUM
Self Glow by James Read Sunrise to Sundown Tinted Tan Serum, £44
This serum blends hyaluronic acid, vitamin E and squalane for radiant skin as well as a non-patchy colour. With an ultra-silky formula, it feels luxurious to use – either once a week for a golden tint or twice for a more bronzed look.



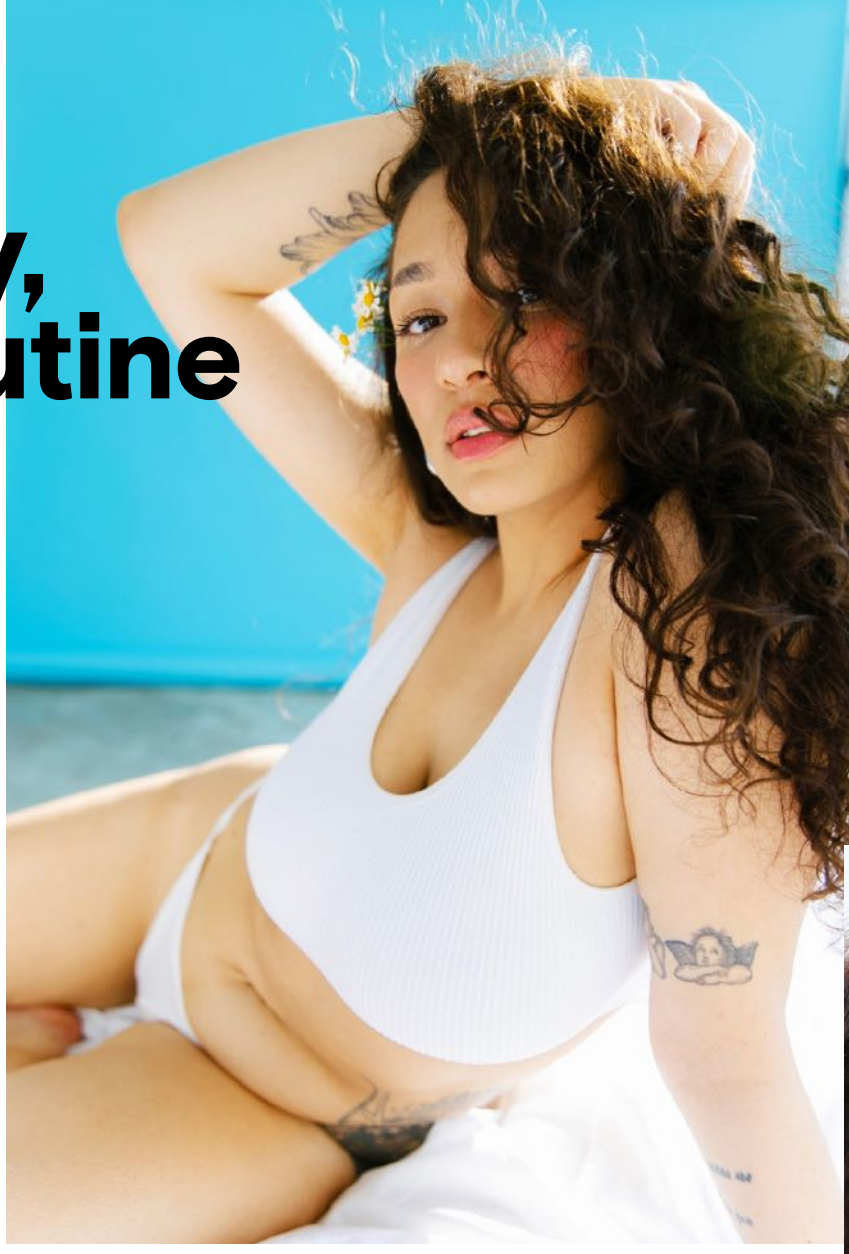
BEST FOR DEEPER SKIN TONES
Caribé Tanning Mousse, £25
Formulated especially for melanated skin, Caribé's lightweight mousse gives a healthy glow to dull or ashy limbs in a matter of pumps. Shades on offer span light, medium, deep and rich.

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

Your body, your routine

Face care? Nailed. Now let's give your limbs the same love

WORDS: LAUREN BALSAMO AND LIA MAPPOURA



First, make a habit of the basics

The core tenets of a good body-care routine: cleansing, moisturising and slathering on SPF. Here's how it's done.

Cleanse

The only hard-and-fast rule here is to avoid soaps and washes with harsh sulphates (typically noted as sodium lauryl/laureth sulfate on ingredient lists). They can strip away your skin's natural oils and compromise its protective skin barrier, says dermatologist Heather Rogers.



Boots Modern Chemistry Glow Body Wash, £9.

Saltair Pink Beach Body Wash, £17

Moisturise

Everyone – yes, literally you, the human reading these words this very second – should use a body moisturiser, says dermatologist Corey L Hartman. 'To effectively hydrate your skin and lock in moisture, look for a formula that contains hyaluronic acid, glycerin and/or ceramides.' You can find them in everything from lightweight gel creams to thick butters. Find one that you love and apply it as soon as you get out of the shower (while your skin is still damp) and then top up as needed throughout the day.



No7 Future Renew Damage Reversal Body Serum, £32.95. Mixa Urea Cica Repair+ Renewing Cream, £9.99

Protect

Without question, you should be applying SPF30 or higher on any part of your body that sees the sun, says Dr Hartman. 'UV exposure is the leading cause of premature ageing, not to mention skin cancer – whether it's July or January.'

Ultra Violette Extreme Screen Hydrating Body & Hand Skinscreen SPF50+, £27. Vichy Capital Soleil Tan Illuminating Sun Protection Water Spray SPF30, £22



A WORD ON BODY OIL

This trendy fave complements moisturiser – but doesn't replace it. Massage it into damp skin, then layer your regular lotion on top, or mix the two together for extra dewiness, says Dr Hartman.

Rare Beauty Find Comfort Hydrating Body Mousse To Oil, £29. Phlur Vanilla Skin Body Oil, £45



PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY, GALLERY STOCK

2 Introduce your actives

Everything you just read will keep your skin healthy and happy. But the serums and treatments here – all with potent, high-performing active ingredients such as niacinamide and retinol – do the heavy lifting when it comes to things like brightening skin tone or fighting acne, says Dr Hartman. Apply these two to three times a week under your body moisturiser for max absorption.

'If you're outside even briefly, antioxidants are a must,' Dr Rogers says. They can neutralise inflammatory free radicals (supple skin's number-one enemy) to help prevent redness and sunspots.



Paula's Choice 5% Niacinamide Body Serum, £34.
Murad Retinal ReSculpt Body Treatment, £79

3 Exfoliate like an expert

Using a chemical exfoliator a few times a week is the move here, according to Dr Hartman and Dr Rogers. Ingredients such as glycolic and salicylic acids dissolve dulling dead skin cells, smooth rough or bumpy texture and unclog pores.

Keratosis pilaris (KP) – the name for the red or brown bumps on your arms, thighs and bum – can be stubborn. Use an acid-soaked exfoliating pad to help erase them.



Byoma Blemish Clearing Body Wash, £13.99.
Nip+Fab Glycolic Fix Daily Cleansing Pads XXL, £19.95



4 Throw in a tool or treatment

For bonus points. These at-home devices and in-clinic therapies are your 'nice to haves', because while you don't need them, they will absolutely level up your body's skin game.

Clinical-grade lasers are spenny (like the Lyma below), but the brightening and smoothing effects are comparable to what you'd get from a pro laser session. For a more affordable option, a gua sha can help tone, ease muscle tension and promote better circulation.



Evolve Beauty Jade Body Gua Sha, £28.
Lyma Laser Starter Kit, £1,999

THE FYI ON SCRUBS

They aren't our experts' preferred method of exfoliation (Dr Rogers says they can cause micro-tears in the skin). But we get it. Scrubs are satisfying to use. So if you're set on using one, opt for a formula that's made with non-abrasive jojoba beads, instead of jagged shells or seeds, and use it once a week max.



Jones Road Beauty Body Scrub, £36.
Monday Haircare Exfoliating Body Scrub, £9



Nailed it: hand care 101

From brittle to brilliant, step by step

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA AND CHARLOTTE BITMEAD

Our hands text, type, carry, cleanse and claw their way through life – and yet we expect our nails to stay glossy, strong and unbothered with just the odd swipe of cuticle oil when we remember. Disappointing, frankly.

The truth? Strong nails aren't often a genetic blessing. They're the result of maintenance, protection and patience. Here's your no-nonsense guide to growing healthier nails – and keeping them that way.

The nitty-gritty basics

It's tempting to rely on acrylics instead of growing your natural nails, but frequent sets can thin the nail plate. The prep process involves filing the surface down, which weakens the structure over time. If you love acrylics, try taking breaks between appointments to let nails recover.

Gel fans, take note: peeling them off yourself might feel satisfying, but it lifts layers of the nail with it, leaving them thin and brittle. Always soak off properly with acetone or book a professional removal.

Hormones also play a part. Lower oestrogen (from pill changes, pregnancy or stress) can affect hydration levels in the body, leaving nails dry and more prone to breakage. While you can't always control hormones, you can support hydration – aim for adequate water intake and consistent moisturising.

Building growth and strength

Manage expectations: nails grow around 3mm a month. You can't speed that up a lot, but you can create ideal conditions.

Nails are made of layers of keratin, and when those layers dry out, they split. Doing things such as wearing rubber gloves when using cleaning products will help prevent that, as prolonged exposure to detergents can dry and weaken skin and nails. And when trimming length, file gently in one direction rather than sawing back and forth, as this can also cause layers to split and peel.

Diet matters. Foods rich in vitamin C and E – think almonds, eggs, peppers and broccoli – support overall nail health. Supplements for hair and nails can help, though consistency is key.

And don't underestimate cuticle oil. Massaging oil into the cuticle and nail bed improves flexibility, boosts circulation to the matrix (where growth begins) and helps prevent peeling. Well-hydrated cuticles also create a healthier environment for nail growth – plus, they instantly make hands look more polished.

Beyond nails, your hand skin needs just as much attention. Daily hand cream is non-negotiable, especially after washing, while LED red light gloves are gaining traction for supporting collagen production and improving the appearance of fine lines and texture.

Just remember: this is a slow process. With consistent protection and care, stronger nails will follow.

FROM BRITTLE TO BRILLIANT: THE KIT

1.



2.



3.



4.



1. 14 Day Manicure Nonicure The Nail Prevention System, £44. 2. Leighton Denny Hand Rebirth Intensive Hand Cream, £14. 3. Margaret Dabbs LED Hand Mitts, £350. 4. Perfectil Nails Supplement 60 Tablets, £15.55

COSMOPOLITAN CLUB COSMO

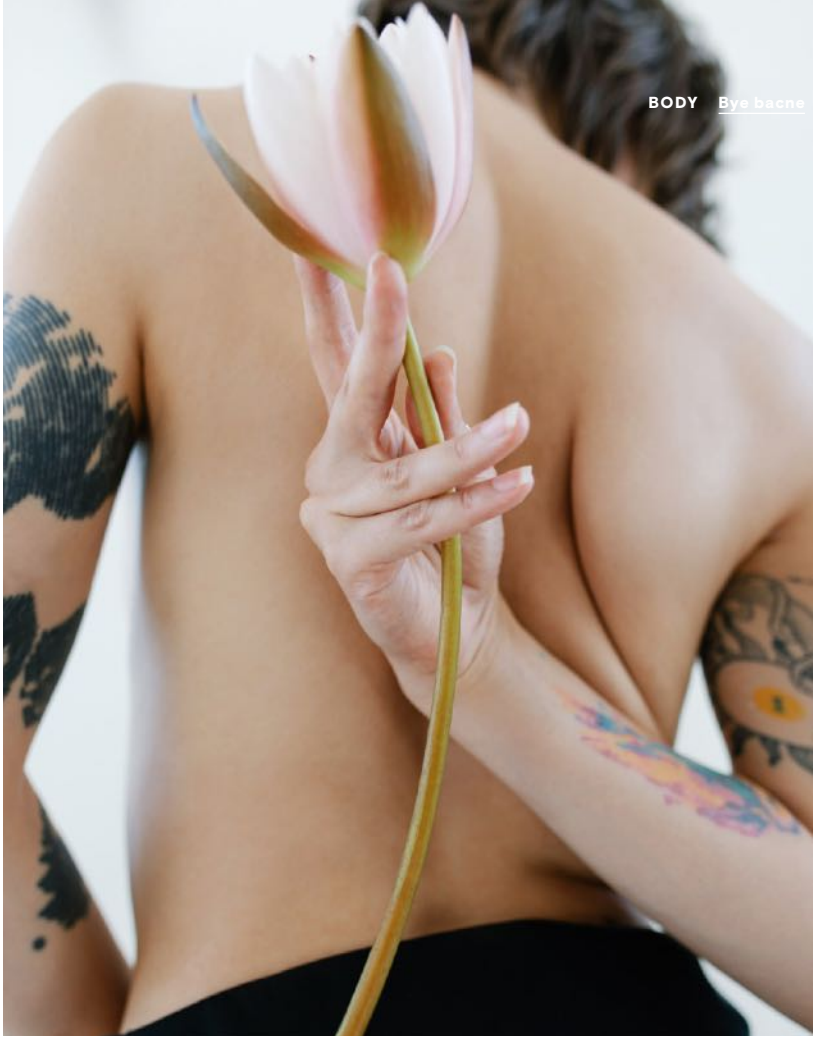
Win one Heroes Discovery Kit from Margaret Dabbs, worth over £60, for Club Cosmo members

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

Don't turn your back on bacne!

Management and treatment this way...

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA



God really gave the toughest battles to his strongest soldiers because, if it weren't difficult enough that I suffer with acne on my face, I get it on my body, too. Feeling seen? Welcome to the bacne club, girl, where the whole crew is quietly suffering. But no more turning our backs – it's time to treat the solution head-on!

WHAT ACTUALLY IS BACNE?

'Body acne develops on areas beyond the face, most often the upper back, shoulders, and chest,' explains consultant dermatologist Ophelia Veraitch. In other words, it's the same clogged pores, blackheads, whiteheads, inflamed red spots and sometimes deep, painful cysts, just now taking residency on your upper torso.

Derrick Phillips, consultant dermatologist, explains, 'When excess oil combines with dead skin cells, pores can become blocked. Add bacteria and inflammation and you can develop a range of lesions.' It's a greatest hits album, frankly... Lucky us!

WHY DO I GET BACNE?

'The skin on our backs is thicker than the skin on our faces and contains a high concentration of oil glands,' says Dr Veraitch. More oil glands = more opportunity for bacne chaos.

Dr Phillips adds that 'sweat, friction and tight or occlusive clothing can further aggravate breakouts'. So yes, your clothes and undies play a minor role. Although let's remember: 'Body acne is not always a sign of poor hygiene,' says Dr Phillips. You are not dirty, you are just blessed with enthusiastic sebaceous glands.

Androgens such as testosterone stimulate oil production, which explains why puberty, menstrual cycles, pregnancy, stress or conditions such as PCOS can dial bacne up. And if acne runs in your family, you're more likely to experience it. For some people, diet can also contribute towards bacne. 'Diets high in dairy and foods that cause rapid spikes in blood sugar may exacerbate acne in some individuals,' says Dr Phillips.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO TREAT BACNE?

'Showering soon after sweating is one of the most important habits,' Dr Veraitch emphasises. Letting sweat sit on the skin encourages bacterial growth and inflammation. It's also important to rinse shampoo and conditioner off thoroughly before washing your back, so residue doesn't linger. Products such as these can also clog the pores.

For mild to moderate bacne, topical actives are where things get clever. Exfoliating body washes or serums containing salicylic acid, niacinamide and/or zinc can help unclog pores and target acne-causing bacteria and inflammation. That said, Dr Veraitch recommends starting with a gentle, non-stripping cleanser, noting that over-cleansing can worsen inflammation.

And at night, switch to a retinoid. 'They accelerate cell turnover and prevent clogged pores,' says Dr Veraitch.

SMOOTH OPERATORS



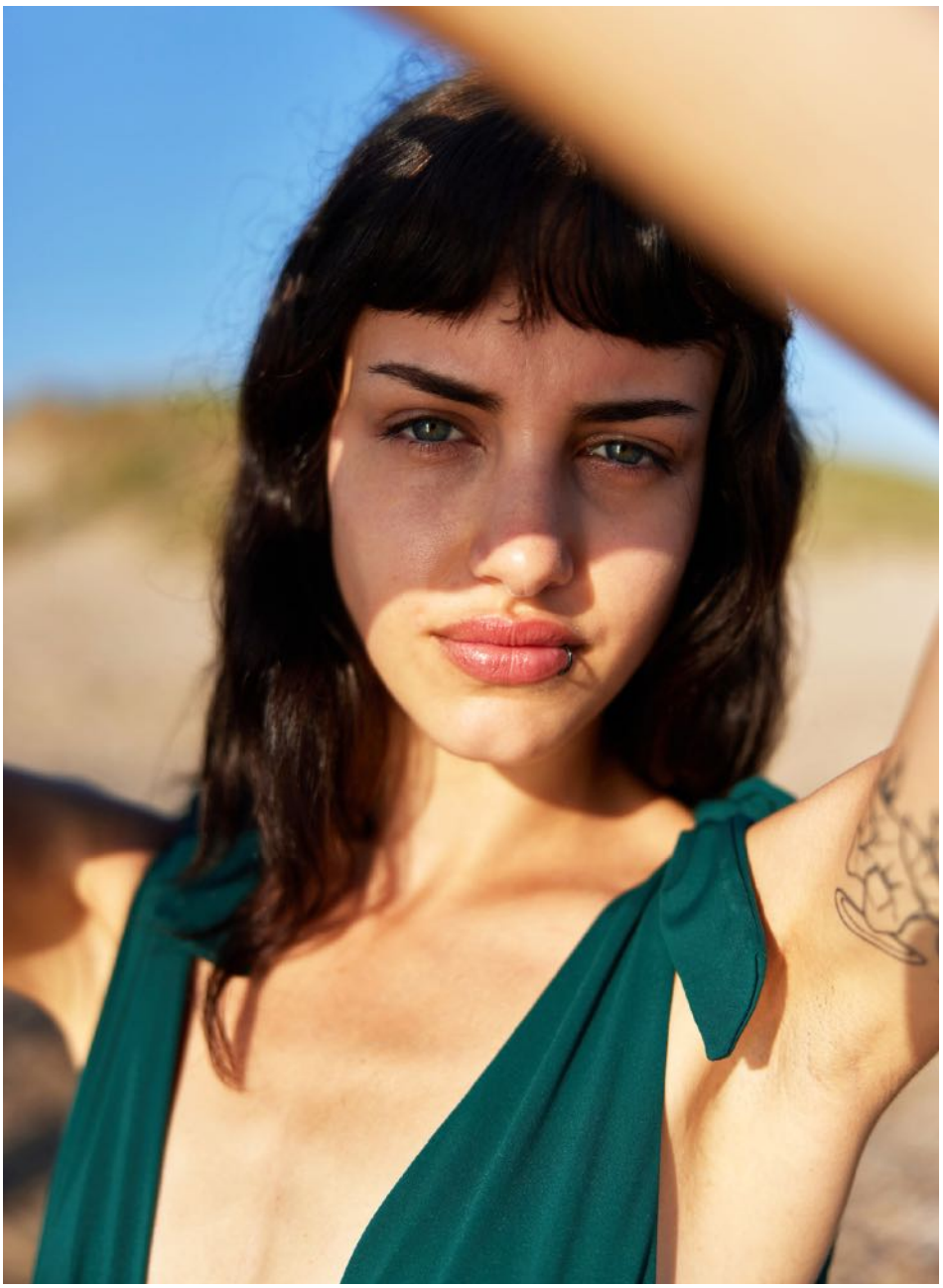
1. Sanex Zero% Gentle Moisture Shower Gel for Sensitive Skin, £3.75
2. Bioderma Sébium Kerato+ Body Spray, £25
3. Topicals Slather Exfoliating Body Serum, £27

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

Your no-nonsense guide to hair removal

From pain-free to painful methods, this is the ultimate cheat sheet to baby-smooth skin

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA



WAXING

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
Hot or cold wax grips the hair and yanks it out from the root in one swift (occasionally eye-watering) motion. It's old school, effective and keeps regrowth at bay for weeks at a time. You can brave DIY waxing at home or book in for a treatment at the salon – the latter is often faster and less painful.

BEST FOR
Longer-lasting smoothness (up to three to six weeks), larger areas, such as legs, arms and bikini line, and people who can tolerate a bit of pain for payoff.

PRICE £
PAIN SCALE 7/10

THREADING

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
An ancient hair-removal technique where a twisted cotton thread traps and pulls out hairs at the follicle level. No chemicals, no heat, just precision and a highly skilled pair of hands. You can save yourself some cash and learn to do this yourself at home (YouTube = BFF), or leave it to the salon professionals.

BEST FOR
Small, delicate areas (hello, brows and upper lip), sensitive skin and anyone who wants laser-sharp definition without irritation or breakouts.

PRICE ££ (OR FREE IF YOU DIY)
PAIN SCALE 6/10

HAIR-REMOVAL CREAM

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
These creams dissolve hair at the surface using chemicals, so you can wipe it away in minutes. And like shaving, results can last anywhere between two and seven days. No pain, no pulling, just a faintly suspicious smell – I'm talking... eggs.

BEST FOR
Quick, painless hair removal, last-minute emergencies and people who hate razors, but don't want the commitment of waxing (patch test first, always).

PRICE £
PAIN SCALE 0/10

LASER HAIR REMOVAL

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
Laser targets the pigment in the hair follicle with concentrated light, damaging it enough to significantly reduce regrowth. The in-salon treatment is not technically permanent, but it's the closest thing we have.

BEST FOR
Long-term hair reduction, busy people who want low-maintenance results and areas where ingrown hairs love to thrive (bikini line, underarms, face).

PRICE ££
PAIN SCALE 9/10

TWEEZERS

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
Tweezers remove individual hairs by pulling them out from the root, giving you total control, one strand at a time. It's slow, methodical and about as low-tech as hair removal gets. But when precision matters, nothing beats it.

BEST FOR
Very small areas, such as brows and chin, or stray facial hairs, quick touch-ups between salon appointments and anyone who wants targeted results without committing to a full treatment.

PRICE £
PAIN SCALE 4/10

EPILATING

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
An epilator is a handheld device with rotating tweezers that pull multiple hairs out from the root at once. The process is similar to waxing, lasting for weeks; only epilation doesn't pull your skin. Efficient? Yes. Comfortable? Debatable.

BEST FOR
Those who want waxing-style results at home, smaller body areas, such as arms or lower legs, and anyone who can tolerate a brief moment of regret during the process.

PRICE £££
PAIN SCALE 8.5/10

IPL (INTENSE PULSED LIGHT)

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
IPL uses broad-spectrum light to target pigment in the hair follicle, gradually slowing regrowth. Think of it as laser's more affordable, at-home cousin – effective, but a little slower to show results.

BEST FOR
Reducing hair growth over time, maintaining smoothness between laser sessions, and treating larger areas, such as legs or underarms. It works best on light skin with dark hair; however, unfortunately doesn't work on darker skin tones or those with grey, blonde or red hair (but do consult a specialist for a full evaluation).

PRICE ££££
PAIN SCALE 6.5/10

RAZORS

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
The fastest, easiest option that needs no introduction. Shaving cuts hair at the surface of the skin. No fancy tech, no appointments, but potential razor burn and/or bumps. To avoid this, make sure to proceed with caution and replace razor heads every few weeks.

BEST FOR
Instant smoothness, total beginners, travel and anyone who values speed over longevity (results last days, not weeks).

PRICE £
PAIN SCALE 0/10

OUR TRIED, TESTED AND TOTALLY WORTH IT PICKS

These are the smooth operators that actually deliver...



Braun IPL Skin i·expert Pro 7 PL7387 Beauty Set, £999.99. Estrid Starter Kit, £9.95. Veet Expert Wax Strips Legs Body Sensitive Hair Removal, £14.49. WooWoo Tame It! Vegan In-Shower Hair Removal, £10.95. Boots Everyday Slanted Tweezers, £2.50. Philips Epilator Series 8000, £189.99

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

1/2 PRICE*

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hair



Your root-to-tip guide to shiny, showstopping hair

PHOTOGRAPHY: LINDSAY ELLARY. MAKEUP: DEANNA MELLUSO AT FORWARD ARTISTS USING ESSENCE COSMETICS AND CATRICE COSMETICS. HAIR: ERIN PIPER HERSCHLEB AT TRACEY MATTINGLY. MODEL: TEHYA ELAM AT FREEDOM MODELS. TEHYA WEARS: TOP, BLUMARINE. SHORTS, ALÉMAIS. SUNGLASSES, JIMMY FAIRLY



The best hair advice you'll ever hear

From our favourite insider experts and the *Cosmopolitan* Beauty Team

AS TOLD TO LIA MAPPOURA

Great hair advice is like a good ol' bit o' gossip: passed down in hushed tones, transformative and obvious once you hear it. From stylists who've seen it all to the *Cosmopolitan* Beauty Team's lessons, these are the nuggets that changed our hair. Ahead: fewer split ends, smarter spending and making peace with your cowlick.

Make sure your hair is fully dry before going to bed



Cece Pasqualoni
HAIRSTYLIST
@_cecedoeshair

'Hair is especially fragile when wet (particularly if it's highlighted or balayaged), so this helps prevent your lengths from snapping. If you need to tie your hair up while wet, avoid very tight hairstyles, such as high ponytails or styles that scrunch the hair too much, and opt for looser styles that put less tension on the hair and scalp.'

Your haircut should suit your life, not just your Instagram



Samantha Cusick
HAIRSTYLIST
@samantha.cusick

'One of the biggest mistakes I see is choosing a haircut that looks great in photos but doesn't work day to day. Be honest about how much time you actually spend styling your hair. A great haircut should support your routine, not complicate it. If you want low-effort hair, say that. The best styles are the ones you can recreate yourself and still feel like you've got your life together.'

Create your own wash schedule



Keeks Reid
BEAUTY DIRECTOR
@keeksreid

'There's so much noise out there about how often to wash your hair, but it's honestly completely personal. When your hair looks greasy or your scalp is pongy, wash it. A clean scalp is where hair growth thrives. I wash mine once a week, while Lia (below) washes hers every day, and it works for us both. You know your hair best!'

Spend more on what stays on your hair



Tom Smith
HAIRSTYLIST
@tomsmithhd

'Your shampoo is only on your hair for a couple of minutes, but leave-in products sit there all day doing the real work, so that is where more of your budget should go. Look for clever, science-led products that genuinely repair, which can replace conditioner and/or be left in. Think of this as regeneration for your hair.'

Rotate braids and cornrow styles



Dionne Smith
HAIRSTYLIST
@dionnesmithofficial

'Protective styles should protect the hair, not stress it. Repeating the same braid or cornrow pattern causes constant tension in one direction, increasing the risk of breakage and traction alopecia. Rotate your patterns, opt for larger braids and avoid tight installation. Most importantly, take breaks between styles and wear your hair loose, so the scalp can recover and breathe. Your hair growth depends on it.'

Colour choices can be a commitment



Jordanna Cobella
HAIRSTYLIST
@jordannacobella

'Before colouring, you need to ask whether your hair is actually in the right condition to withstand it – can it handle lightening, or is it better suited to staying darker? Every colour choice comes with a certain level of commitment, which is something that needs to be understood from the outset.'

Don't style with hair care



Lia Mappoura
BEAUTY WRITER
@lia.map

'A very wise trichologist once told me that using a hair mask to slick my hair back isn't always the best idea – despite what TikTok might suggest. Applying a rich mask at the roots can clog follicles and therefore stunt growth, causing more harm than good. Instead, when slicking back (in the interim), it's best to stick to proper styling products – these are actually formulated to hold hair in place without compromising scalp health.'

Protection should never be skipped



Urmi Pandit
BEAUTY ASSISTANT
@urmipandit_

'My best hair advice is simple, but I learned it the hard way: always use a heat protectant. As a teenager, I used straighteners on a daily basis with zero protection from the dryness, breakage and frizz that hot tools can cause to the hair cuticles. So, whether it's a styling cream packed with hydrating ingredients or a few spritzes of a lightweight defence spray, make heat protectants part of your routine.'

Regular haircuts are not the enemy



Lorraine Dublin
HAIRSTYLIST
@lorraine_dublin

'Getting regular trims can help remove split ends and prevent them from causing further damage up the hair shaft. Once a strand splits, the damage continues to creep up the hair shaft, leading to thinning, breakage and an overall dull, unhealthy finish. Healthy hair starts from root to tip, and letting go of split ends will result in thicker, fuller and far more luxurious strands.'

Stop fighting your natural texture and work with it



Edward James
HAIRSTYLIST
@edwardjamesofficial

'One of the best things you can do for your hair is understand what it naturally wants to do. Fighting cowlicks, curls or wave patterns usually creates more stress and damage. A good haircut should work *with* your texture, not against it. Once you lean into it, styling becomes quicker and your hair instantly looks more intentional.'

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY; DANIEL GARDINER

The big bob

Cutting to the chase, there is a bob for everyone...

WORDS: KEEKS REID AND LIA MAPPOURA

Thinking about going for the chop? We don't blame you. Over the past year, bob haircuts have dominated beauty trends – and for good reason. As card-carrying members of the bob brigade, Lia and I can say from the bottom of our hearts, whether you've got thick waves, baby-fine strands or coils that bounce, there's a bob out there made for you. Because the bob isn't just a haircut, it's a whole vibe.

But not all cuts are created equal, and the key to nailing that 'I just left the salon and feel like a whole new person' energy is choosing the right style for your hair type as well as one that flatters your face shape. Luckily, we've spoken to some of the beauty industry's most knowledgeable hair experts to share their tricks so you can find your very own, perfect bob.

From blunt micro cuts to shaggy and layered, we present the ultimate inspo and stylist-approved tips for every texture and thickness.



Bobs for thick and dense hair

For thicker textures, it's often thought that bobs will always make hair look even thicker, and if you have a dense amount of hair, the cut will look blocky. But Lord Farquaad's hair doesn't have to be your destiny. Techniques such as point-cutting, undercutting and creating invisible layers will work well.

LONG, SOFT SHAG

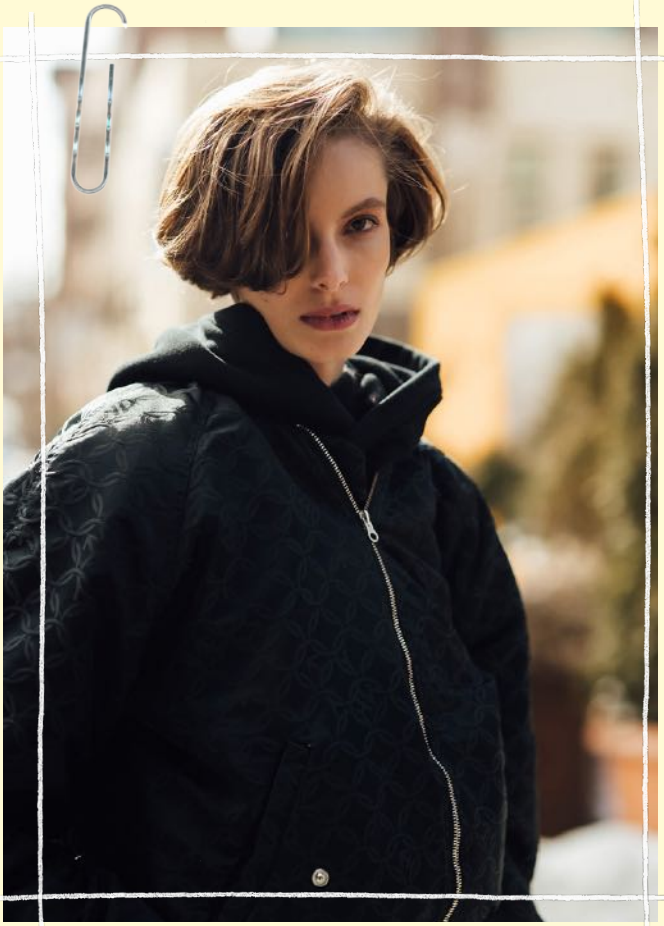
Thick 'n' curly girls, this one's for you. A shag haircut doesn't have to be the retro look from the 80s. Cuts like this are a modern, wearable take that enhance your hair's natural texture with boundless movement.

FLICKY BOB

If you have a wavy or curly texture, your hair will naturally want to kink out at the ends – embrace it! It means the style will hold longer, too. Here, a one-length bob with point-cutting to remove some of the blockiness works really well.

breakdown





LAYERED LOB

Long layers give thicker hair a lot more movement, so this lob (long bob) hairstyle will be super flattering for anyone with thick, straight hair. 'The key to nailing a layered bob is understanding how the cut complements your face shape and hair texture; it's not a one-size-fits-all haircut,' warns hairstylist Chloë Swift.

HEART-THROB BOB

Coined in 2022 by hairstylist Mara Roszak, the heart-throb bob is a style that resembles that of your favourite 90s crush. The cut itself is defined by shorter, neck-hugging strands at the back, with longer, floppier layers at the top. Not to mention the soft, graduating curtain bang making for a face-framing style. This style works best for those with straight and wavy hair, with medium thickness and a lot of density to play with.

Bobs for thin and fine hair

The secret to achieving healthier-looking, fuller hair? Go blunt. Sharp, laser-cut bobs help to build density in thin hair types. 'This is the ultimate "thickening haircut" cheat code,' says Hasan Sahin, stylist at Larry King Marylebone & South Kensington. A super-blunt bob helps eliminate wispy ends, making fine hair look instantly more polished.







CLASSIC BLUNT BOB

With a sharp middle parting and crisp, blunt ends, this bob is the ultimate choice for creating the illusion of fuller, thicker-looking hair. It is the hardest bob to maintain, though, due to the sharp lines requiring regular trims.

PAGEBOY/HALO BOB

Okay, no one wants to look like a pageboy, which is why The House of Sassoon rebranded this 70s trend as the 'Halo bob' for 2026. Mark Hayes, creative director at Sassoon, tells us that the look works easiest on straight/slightly wavy hair because the defined line is more visible. 'It's great for fine-to-medium hair types, as it can add density and polish.'

FRENCH BOB

As its name suggests, the French bob draws inspiration from the Parisian chic look. 'It's a bob that's effortlessly cool and jaw-skimming,' says Samantha Cusick, *Cosmo*'s contributing hair expert. 'It's short, sharp and always looks like you've made zero effort (in the best way).'

PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY, LAUNCHMETRICS/SPOTLIGHT

WAVY BOB

Whether you have natural waves or need to enhance with a hot tool, this texture adds an effortlessly relaxed feel, making it perfect for anyone after a softer, more undone look and added volume.



CLOUD CURL BOB

Fine curly hair types should look to curved and rounded bob shapes. In particular, Tom Smith, *Cosmo*'s contributing hair expert, says that 'bob-shag hybrids can work well thanks to the natural curvaceous quality curls have'.



The best bob shape for coily hair

Coily hair textures are best suited to sculptural, shapely bobs, really taking advantage of the way coils can be shaped and moulded. 'Side partings can help to allow textured hair to be stretched out into a shape that feels more bob-like,' Smith says, while hair expert Jordanna Cobella adds that a tapered bob is the way to go. 'The key is to cut it dry in its natural state for the true account on the shape it will take,' she says.

YOUR PRE-BOB CHECKLIST

CAN YOU HANDLE HIGHER MAINTENANCE HAIR?
While not all bobs are hard work, some styles do require more styling than longer lengths to get the shape to sit properly. Are you willing to sacrifice a little more time every morning to get the look you want?

CAN YOU AFFORD MORE REGULAR HAIRCUTS?
Yes, we should all be trimming our hair every few months, but be honest, do you actually? Well, with bobs you can't hide it. So, until you're ready to grow it out, you need to budget for those extra salon trips.

ARE YOU SURE YOU WANT TO GO THAT SHORT?
Often, the best way to cut your hair is in stages, starting with a lob and then going higher when you get more used to seeing yourself with shorter hair.

BOB STYLING SAVIOURS



REDKEN ACIDIC BONDING CONCENTRATE HAIR BANDAGE BALM, £33.40
If you notice any split ends ruining your cut before you can book into the salon, this balm is like a bandage for broken strands.



PANTENE PRO-V REPAIR & PROTECT HAIR OIL WITH VITAMIN E, £3.99
Bobs need light styling products to not weigh down the look. This oil gives you shine and strengthens hair.



DIZZIAK HARD SERUM, £28
Looking to switch up your look without having to wash your hair? This serum creates slicked-back styles that can be brushed out before bed.



AMIKA THE CLOSER INSTANT SPLIT-END SEAL CREAM, £28
Minimise the look of flyaways with this smoothing cream.



Thin hair vs fine hair: the differences

Is it genetics? Is it your diet? Trichologist and hair expert Hannah Gaboardi reveals all

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

Did you know that you can have fine and thin hair, or fine but thick hair? Confused? Well, while 'thin' and 'fine' are often used interchangeably (guilty), they're actually very different. So while you might swear that you have thin hair, what you really have could be fine hair – which comes with its own needs, quirks and drama. We tapped up trichologist and hair expert Hannah Gaboardi to break it all down.

The differences between fine and thin hair

Let's simplify things. Fine hair is all about the size of the hair strand (the diameter), while thin hair refers to how much hair you actually have on your head. In other words, density. Less density = more visible scalp.

As Gaboardi explains, 'Some people can have fine hair but loads of it, which means you may appear to have a lot of hair, but it is more prone to breakage. Others may have thicker follicles but less density, where hair loss is more obvious. This type of hair is more resistant to heat and chemicals.'

Causes of fine hair

If you've always had soft, silky, fly-away strands, chances are it's written in your DNA. 'Most people inherit fine hair; it's not caused by anything you've done,' Gaboardi says.

Ethnicity can also play a role, according to Gaboardi. 'People of European descent are more likely to have finer hair follicles, whereas those of Asian or African descent tend to have thicker, more robust strands.'

Bottom line? Fine hair isn't a flaw; it's your hair's natural blueprint. If volume is something you crave, there are loads of easy ways to cheat volume in just three steps. Head to cosmopolitan.com/uk/beauty-hair/hair/fine-hair-routine to find out how.

Causes of thin hair

Thin or thinning hair, on the other hand, usually has a bit more going on BTS. 'Hair thinning can occur because of nutritional deficiencies, hormonal changes or genetics,' says Gaboardi.

Iron and vitamin deficiencies are among the most common culprits. 'When there's an internal imbalance, your body prioritises essential organs over hair growth,' she explains. The result? Hair that looks dull, is weak and sheds more than usual.

Hormones can also wreak havoc on your hair. Postpartum changes, menopause or anything that messes with oestrogen and progesterone can shorten the hair's growth cycle. Meanwhile, higher levels of androgens can shrink hair follicles, making thinning more noticeable over time.

In Gaboardi's words, 'Hair thinning happens due to a medical reason – either a deficiency, hormones or inherited genes.'

If you're experiencing significant thinning or hair loss (as in, more than a few strands in the plughole), it's important to get to the root of the issue first. Products can help, but it's best to find solace in a doctor's appointment!

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARY FIX/GALLERYSTOCK

Pump up the volume!

These easy tricks come in clutch when your hair needs a little extra 'oomph'

WORDS: URMI PANDIT

While there are loads of fine hair-friendly haircuts, fancy blowout tools and seamless extensions on the market, when it comes to day-to-day styling, most of us just want a quick lift and some boosted volume. Enter: four of the easiest ways to zhoosh up your roots – illusions, tricks and hacks included.



Flip your parting

This hack literally takes 10 seconds – and according to celebrity hairstylist Melissa Timperley, it works wonders.

'Roots naturally resist being pushed the opposite way, so this instantly creates the lift you need,' explains Timperley. 'I recommend switching your parting while you're drying your hair,' she adds – this way, the heat will combat your roots' reluctancy to flip another way.

Use volumising products

Given the quality of today's volumising sprays, roots can be boosted in a matter of spritzes. Celebrity hairstylist Sam McKnight shares a nifty hack for making a spray work harder: 'Tip your head upside down before applying the spray into the crown and throughout the hair. Flip it back, and you're good to go – it makes a big impact.'

Or, for wavy and curlier hair types, try a mousse. McKnight recommends applying in layers to get a long-lasting fullness without weighing the hair down at the roots.

Blow-dry strategically

You might be noticing a theme here, but trust us! When blow-drying, flipping your hair upside down and drying your roots in the opposite direction to the way they naturally fall is another of McKnight's top recommendations for taking your hair from flat to full.

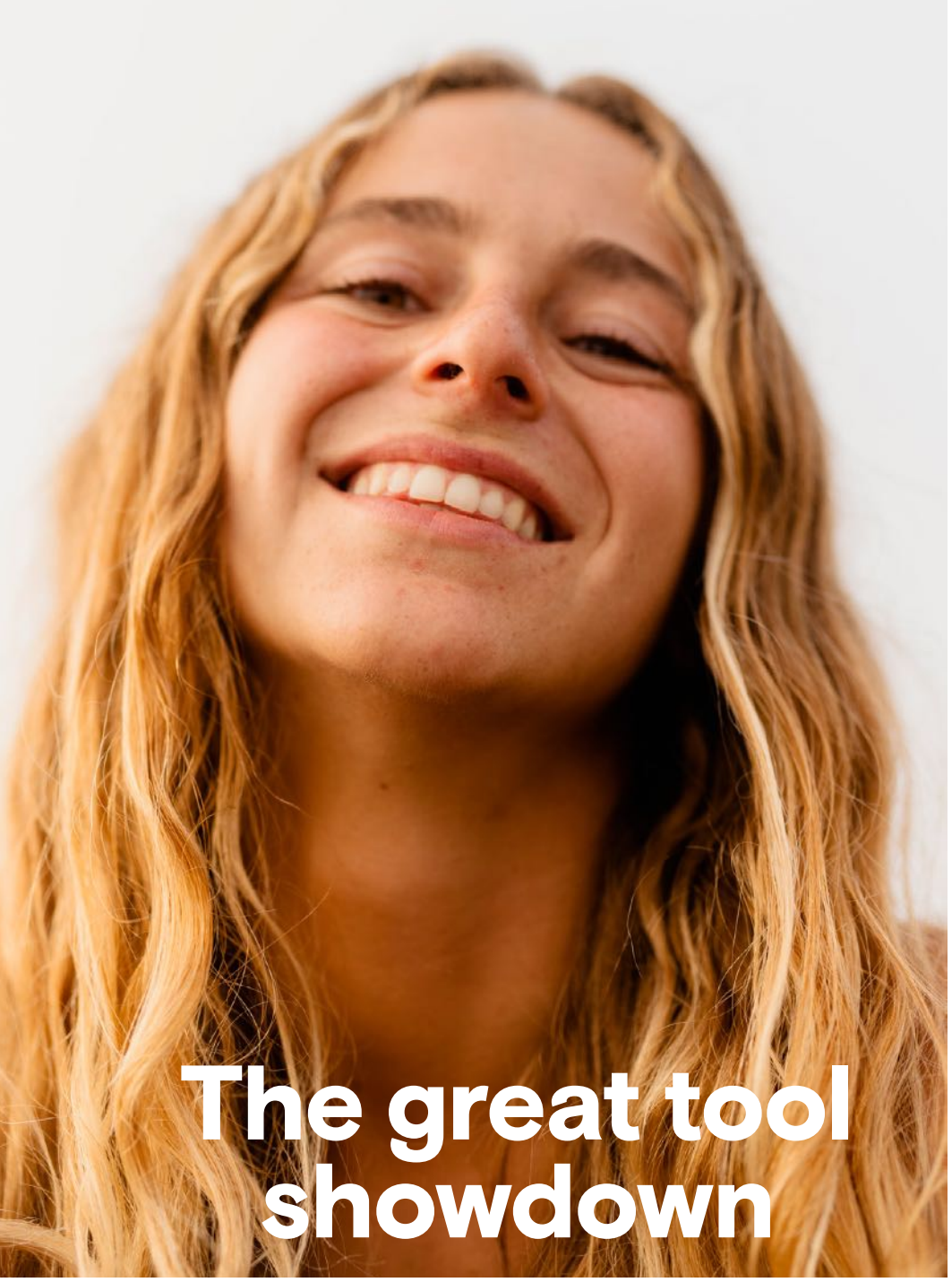
'Unless you have very thick and coarse hair, take the nozzle off the hairdryer. It concentrates the flow of air, which can smooth your hair while drying,' adds McKnight.

Add invisible layers

At your next salon appointment, ask your haidresser to add some invisible layers, a cutting technique that adds hidden oomph. 'These sit just on the top section of the hair and create lift without thinning out the ends,' explains Timperley.

The voluminous style possibilities are endless, but for real lift, use a wide-barrelled tong. It'll give you big, bouncy curls that last, adding to the illusion of thickness.

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY, GALLERYSTOCK, GETTY



The great tool showdown

Where technology, style, performance and staying power go head to head

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

There are few modern anxieties like standing in an aisle of hair tools, holding something that costs the same as a city break and wondering whether it will change your life or live under your bed with all your other impulse purchases. We're promised bounce, shine, volume, waves and gloss – sometimes as individual miracles, sometimes all bundled together in one very confident tool – but how are we meant to tell which ones do what and whether any of them will work for your hair type and needs?

Ahead, find our side-by-side cheat sheet, complete with what each tool does, who it's for and whether it's worth the investment.

The blow-dry brush

WHAT DOES IT DO?
The blow-dry brush is the love child of a hairdryer and a brush, designed to dry and style in one go. It can be used on wet or dry hair to smooth flyaways and add volume at the root – without requiring three arms.

WHO IS IT BEST FOR?
Anyone who wants a bouncy blow-dry at home. It's ideal for most hair types, though those with curly or coily hair may need more direct heat (eg, finishing with straighteners) for smoother results.

OUR TOP PICK
Shark Glossi 2-in-1 Hot Tool And Air Glosser, £159.99



The waver

WHAT DOES IT DO?
Creates uniform mermaid waves using a triple-barrel design. The result is texture without curls and effortless style without arm ache.

WHO IS IT BEST FOR?
People who want instant 'cool hair'. Ideal for fine hair that needs grip, or anyone bored of curls but not ready for a straight look.

OUR TOP PICK
Beauty Works The Waver, £70



The hot brush

WHAT DOES IT DO?
Unlike the blow-dry brush that dries and styles with air, the hot brush uses direct heat via a ceramic-coated barrel. With this in mind, you should never use one on wet hair, as it'll cause irreparable heat damage to your strands.

WHO IS IT BEST FOR?
Those wanting to style second-day hair with minimal effort – aka: smooth, soften bends, add gentle volume and/or tame frizz with ease. If you want to achieve more defined curls, this isn't the tool for you (skip to the curling tong).



OUR TOP PICK
Wavytalk Blowout Express Ionic Thermal Brush, £39.99

The multi-styler

WHAT DOES IT DO?
Everything, tbh. A multi-styler dries, smooths, curls, waves and volumises using attachments. It promises a full toolkit in one sleek box and usually comes with a hefty price tag. Most rely on hot air, though some combine air with heated plates.

WHO IS IT BEST FOR?
Hair maximalists. Gadget lovers. People who enjoy options. If you like switching up your look or want one tool to rule them all, the multi-styler is for you.



OUR TOP PICK
Dyson Airwrap Co-anda2x Multi-styler and Dryer, £579.99

The curling wand

WHAT DOES IT DO?
The curling wand uses a rounded barrel (available in different sizes) to create everything from loose, glossy waves to tight and defined curls. It's just about finding the right size for your hair length, type and texture.

WHO IS IT BEST FOR?
People who want uniform, long-lasting curls and don't mind a bit of technique.



OUR TOP PICK
Hershesons The Wand, £120

The straightener

WHAT DOES IT DO?
Our entry point to poker-straight hair, the straightener straightens (duh), smooths, curls (yes, really), flicks and polishes hair. It's versatile, powerful and still doing the most.

WHO IS IT BEST FOR?
Almost everyone. Especially those with frizz, waves or commitment issues. It can smooth waves and even curl – if you only own one hot tool, this is the sensible choice.

OUR TOP PICK
BaByliss Hydro-Fusion Anti-Frizz Hair Straightener, £100



Heated rollers

WHAT DO THEY DO?
Heated rollers use direct heat via often ceramic-infused barrels to set volume and shape while you do literally anything else. They create lift, body and soft curls with minimal effort and should only be used on dry hair.

WHO ARE THEY BEST FOR?
Volume lovers, multitaskers, and anyone nostalgic for a glamorous past life.

OUR TOP PICK
Remington PROluxe Heated Hair Rollers, £44.99



The hair dryer

WHAT DOES IT DO?
Dries hair, of course! But a good one does more: smooths cuticles, boosts shine, reduces frizz and cuts drying time dramatically.

WHO IS IT BEST FOR?
Anyone with hair. Air drying isn't for everyone, and dryers offer a way to quickly style, from smooth and straight to diffused curls.

OUR TOP PICK
GHD Speed Ionic Hair Dryer, £299



RULES TO REMEMBER

ALWAYS USE A HEAT PROTECTANT
When it comes to maintaining hair health, this is a non-negotiable.

KNOW YOUR HEAT SOURCE
Tools that use air are generally safe on damp hair. Tools with heated ceramic plates or barrels should only ever be used on fully dry hair, unless stated otherwise.

MORE HEAT ≠ BETTER RESULTS
Fine hair needs less heat; thicker hair needs patience, not always maximum temperature. Cranking up the heat is how you fry shine.

CLEAN YOUR TOOLS
Product and hair build-up on plates and barrels affects performance and finish. Wipe the tools down regularly (once they're cool) and clean their filters.

LET HAIR COOL BEFORE TOUCHING
Curls and waves set as they cool – some tools have a 'cool shot' button to achieve this as a final styling step. Touching them too soon is how you undo your own work.

COSMOPOLITAN CLUB COSMO
Win a GHD Speed Ionic Hair Dryer worth £299!

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

Your curls and coils cheat sheet

Aka a super-handy guide to texture

These are the typical characteristics of curls and coils – and the products your hair will love

WORDS: LAUREN GORDON



Curls

Often referred to as: *Type 3*
Looks like: *Ringlets or corkscrews*
Large, loose ringlets, springy corkscrews or tight, pencil-width curls.
Porosity: *Mid-high*
Curly hair 'takes in moisture easily and holds on to it well when cared for properly,' says *Cosmo*'s contributing hair expert, Lorraine Dublin.
Likes: *Leave-ins and creams*
Fenty Hair The Comeback Kid Instant Damage Repair Treatment doubles as a leave-in conditioner when hair needs extra care. Pair it with Fenty Hair The Homecurl Curl Defining Cream, which 'gives moisture, softness and definition without weighing curls down', says Dublin.
Dislikes: *Sulphates*
'Sulphates can overly strip the hair, lift the cuticle and leave it feeling dull and dry,' says Nicola Harrowell, celebrity hair stylist and Curlsmith expert. 'It's best to steer clear of products containing drying alcohols, which can compromise moisture levels and lead to breakage.'
Dryness level: *Fairly dry*
Natural oils don't always reach the ends of curly hair due to its tightness, so strands can become parched between washes.

WHAT IS SHRINKAGE?

Dublin calls shrinkage a 'natural phenomenon'. It's where curls or coils appear much shorter than their actual length. 'Hair can shrink anywhere from 50% to 80% as it dries. When curls tighten and spring back up as they dry, it's usually a sign of healthy, elastic hair.'

MOISTURE VS DEFINITION

Moisture and definition are two different entities and should be treated as such. Moisture is all about hydration, while definition is about shape and hold. 'Just like with skincare, moisturiser alone doesn't give structure or style; it just keeps your skin (or hair) hydrated,' Harrowell explains.

On the other hand, definition is about shape and is the result of using a product. 'Styling products such as gels, mousses and foams are like foundation for the face,' says Harrowell. 'They add shine and structure, enhance curl patterns and create a polished look, without providing hydration.'

CARE FOR YOUR CURLS



1. Fenty Hair The Comeback Kid Instant Damage Repair Treatment, £34
2. Curlsmith Curl Quenching Conditioning Wash, £22
3. Fenty Hair The Homecurl Curl Defining Cream, £29
4. The Doux Big Poppa Defining Gel, £13.99

Coils

Often referred to as: *Type 4*
Looks like: *Small zigzags or coils*
Small, defined coils are often in a zigzag pattern; curls are less visible or tight and dense.
Porosity: *High*
Coily hair cuticles are raised, letting moisture enter quickly but escape just as fast, resulting in dryness, frizz and tangling.
Likes: *Minimal manipulation and deep conditioning*
Dublin swears by deep conditioning coily hair regularly, manipulating it as little as possible and finishing with cool or cold rinses to close the cuticle. 'I love Aunt Jackie's Moisturizing And Softening Shampoo, Oh So Clean! along with Aunt Jackie's Transform Hydrating Leave-In Conditioner. Together, they help keep the hair moisturised, soft and easier to detangle.'
Dislikes: *Too many heavy products*
Deep treatments are a win for coily hair, but make sure you aren't overloading with multiple heavy products. Harrowell says, 'Too much cream or gel can weigh down curls, obscure natural patterns and cause build-up.'
Dryness level: *High*
Due to its zigzag or kinked hair structure, coily hair has the highest level of dryness, as natural oils (sebum) can't easily travel down the hair shaft. However, Dublin says that healthy hair 'should feel balanced, not constantly dry and not overly soft or gummy'.



PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

WHY DOES COILY HAIR NEED MORE MOISTURE?
Dr Sharon Wong, consultant dermatologist and president of the Institute of Trichologists, explains that the natural coil creates points where the cuticle layer lifts, allowing water to leave the hair shaft. 'The curlier the hair, the more porous the fibre and the drier it is, hence needing treatments to help with hydration and moisture.'

BREAKAGE VS DRYNESS
Dryness is a sign of potential breakage, so being able to spot the difference is key. Dr Wong says that breakage happens when the hair fibre has 'fractured or snapped' along its length, whereas dryness is what makes coily hair susceptible to breakage. 'Dehydrated hair leads to strands that are rigid and inflexible. This loss of elasticity makes it prone to break with little force or tension.'

YOUR COILY TREATS

1.
2.
3.
4.



1. Aunt Jackie's Moisturizing And Softening Shampoo, Oh So Clean!, £9.20
2. Aunt Jackie's Transform Hydrating Leave-In Conditioner, £11.99
3. Cécred Hair & Scalp Balm, £33
4. Design Essentials Almond & Avocado Leave-In Conditioner, £15.10



A complete guide to scalp care

Healthy hair doesn't begin with miracle masks or viral hacks. It begins where the hair grows

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

To put it simply, scalp care rarely gets the attention it deserves – just like the middle child in any family, TBH. Not ignored entirely (that would be dramatic), but certainly overlooked. You layer serums on to your face like a mille-feuille. Your body is basted in lotions like a Christmas turkey. Meanwhile, your scalp – the foundation from which your hair grows – is left to fend for itself under a dry shampoo cloud and the occasional panic wash. It's time to stage an intervention.

Scalp care shouldn't be a once-in-a-blue-moon ritual; it should be basic maintenance. If you want shiny, strong, non-temperamental hair, you need to treat the scalp like skin. Because it is skin. With pores. And feelings.

Here's your no-nonsense guide to cleansing, treating and protecting it like a pro – so you can build stronger strands from the root and beyond.

Cleansing 101

If your shampoo technique involves a frantic 12-second lather focused exclusively on the lengths, we need to talk. Shampoo is for your scalp. Conditioner is for your hair. This is fact.

When you wash, focus on the roots. Use your fingertips and gently massage in small circles for at least 60 seconds. This dislodges oil, product build-up and the dry shampoo sediment you've been emotionally dependent on.

How often you should wash depends on your scalp/hair type:

- *Oily scalp:* Every one to two days.
- *Dry or sensitive scalp:* Two to three times a week.
- *Very textured or coily hair:* Once a week is fine – just ensure you're cleansing thoroughly when you do.

If your scalp feels itchy, greasy or smells faintly of 'gym bag', that's your cue. And remember: Not everyone's scalp and hair is the same – do what's best for you.



Ouai Detox Shampoo, £28

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

Exfoliate like you mean it

You exfoliate your face. You exfoliate your body. Why is your scalp exempt from this sloughing renaissance?

A scalp scrub removes dead skin cells, excess sebum and product build-up – all of which can clog follicles and make your hair look flat and lacklustre. Think of it as clearing the soil before you try to grow healthy plants.

There are two types:

- *Physical scrubs with tiny granules:* Best for thicker hair types or heavy product users who want that immediate, satisfyingly squeaky-clean feeling, but not always great for curly or coily hair.
- *Chemical exfoliants with acids such as salicylic acid:* Ideal for oily, flaky or acne-prone scalps, as they dissolve build-up inside the pores without the need for scrubbing.

Use a scalp exfoliator once a week if you're product-heavy or prone to oiliness. If your scalp is sensitive, every two weeks is plenty. Over-exfoliating can leave it irritated and dry which kinda defeats the entire point.



Fable & Mane SahaScalp Wild Ginger Purifying Scrub, £32

Alpha-H Healthy Scalp Exfoliating Treatment, £24.99

PRO TIP
Always follow with a hydrating conditioner on your lengths.

Serums aren't just for skincare

Just as they are in skincare, scalp serums are the overachievers of haircare. They target specific concerns such as thinning, dryness, irritation and/or excess oil.

- *For dry or flaky scalps:* Look for hyaluronic acid or niacinamide in the ingredients list.
- *To combat excess oil:* Try niacinamide or lightweight balancing formulas.
- *If you're concerned about thinning:* Use a serum with peptides, caffeine or growth-supporting ingredients. (More on this on pages 78 and 91.)

Apply them directly on to a clean scalp and massage in gently. Most are leave-in and water-based, which means no rinsing and no drama.

In terms of frequency, the general rule for scalp serum use is daily or a few times a week, depending on the formula. Above all, consistency is key, and like skincare, it can take a few months to see a difference. Using a growth serum on Monday and expecting to be Rapunzel by Thursday is wishful thinking.



Nioxin Night Density Rescue Serum - Overnight Hair Thickening Treatment, £60.75

Oil up

Oils get a bad reputation, mostly because we associate them with grease. But the right scalp oil, used correctly, can soothe dryness, reduce flaking and improve overall scalp comfort.

If your scalp feels tight, flaky or irritated, a few drops of lightweight oil (such as jojoba or argan) can be massaged in pre-shampoo and left on for 20 to 30 minutes before washing. Hair oiling is rooted in traditional Indian beauty rituals, where warm oils have been massaged into the scalp for centuries to nourish the skin, strengthen strands and support healthy growth. Think of this as the equivalent of using a hydrating and repairing mask on hair lengths. Don't overdo it, though – once a week is plenty for most people.



Larry King Hair Spoilt For Choice Hair Oil, £28

Always protect

We've all made this mistake: diligently slathering SPF on to our faces and limbs (like responsible adults), only to forget the actual strip of exposed skin running down our parting. Fast-forward five hours, and your scalp feels tight, tender and oh-so irritated. Yep, your scalp also faces the sun and needs equal protection.

So, if you're spending time outside, you can either:

- Wear a hat.
- Or use a lightweight scalp SPF spray.



Ultrasun SPF50 UV Face & Scalp Mist, £22

Acne, scalp edition

If you've ever found a pimple hiding under your hairline, it's more than likely scalp acne.

Spots on the scalp happen when oil, sweat and product build-up clog follicles. Add friction from tight hairstyles or hats, and you've got yourself a small but mighty breakout.

Here's what helps:

- Wash regularly (especially after sweating).
- Avoid heavy, pore-clogging styling products at the roots.
- Use a shampoo with salicylic acid if breakouts are frequent.
- If it's persistent, painful or spreading, see a dermatologist. Not everything can be solved with an at-home haircare routine, sadly.



A handy little guide to bond repair

Let's delve beneath the cuticle, shall we?

WORDS: KEEKS REID

Few things have revolutionised the hair world like bond repair. Think back 10 years and hair pros were just getting to grips with this sparkly new in-salon service called Olaplex (it launched in the UK in 2015), but fast-forward to 2026 and pretty much everyone you know has heard of the powers of bond repair, and the market is absolutely booming. So what exactly is it and do you actually need it? Here's EYNTK...

What is bond repair?

'Bond repair works on the internal structure of the hair and protects the bonds within it,' says Tim Scott-Wright, owner of Tim Scott-Wright at The Hair Surgery. 'Bonds are broken; this causes damage and bond repair technology repairs those bonds from within the hair. It focuses on structural rather than cosmetic repair.'

How do hair bonds get broken?

If you like to have a bit of fun with your hair, you might break a few bonds doing so. Bleach, colour, chemical straightening and too much heat can all wreak havoc on your hair's internal bonds.

Do you need bond repair if you don't bleach or heat-style your hair?

The simple answer is no, as there's nothing to repair. Would you try to superglue a mug that wasn't broken? If you have 'virgin' hair but it's dry, dull or frizzy, you should try a hydrating treatment instead.

Is bond repair a permanent or temporary fix?

'Bonds can be broken continuously, so while the hair is being repaired, it's important to remember that this repair isn't permanent,' says Scott-Wright. 'You will need to maintain some form of bond repair within your haircare routine.' Also, be wary of any product claiming to be bond repair that you can apply to dry hair – your hair bonds are beneath the top layer of each strand, so hair needs to be wet to reach them.

BEST VALUE BOND REPAIR SYSTEM

L'Oréal Paris Elvive Bond Repair Full Routine Bundle for Damaged Hair, £59.96



BEST LEAVE-IN TREATMENT

Living Proof Triple Bond Complex, £42



BEST INTENSE MASK

Amika The Kure Intense Strength Repair Mask 250ml, £35



BEST FOR VERY DAMAGED BONDS

K18 Leave-in Molecular Repair Hair Mask, 50ml, £70



PHOTOGRAPHY: TORY RUST/GALLERYSTOCK

Get glossed!

The best at-home glosses on the market, tried and tested

WORDS: URMI PANDIT

Whether you've got dull hair in need of shine or colour-treated hair that fades too fast, at-home treatments can grant silky-soft strands in a matter of minutes. We put five of the most raved about glosses to the test...



LIVING PROOF PERFECT HAIR DAY HIGH-SHINE GLOSS, £32

At first, this cream-like silicone-free formula was a little thicker than I prefer. But as soon as I lathered it on, it felt lightweight and instantly conditioning. Better still, the glossy finish survived a hectic work week and two hair washes.



GLAZE SUPERGLOSS SHEER GLOW CLEAR CONDITIONING GLOSS, £16

This is for anyone in need of a natural-looking shine. Because it's semi-permanent, the results last impressively, too. Having gone for the transparent option, I didn't see a huge difference to my colour, though.





REDKEN ACIDIC COLOR GLOSS, £34

This high-tech pH-balancing treatment is best suited to those with colour-treated hair in need of a refresh. Beyond breathing life back into my red hair (which, at this point, was begging for a salon trip), it gave me the softest strands, so I'll definitely be reusing!



L'ORÉAL PARIS ELVIVE GLYCOLIC GLOSS 5 MINUTE LAMINATION RINSE-OFF, £16.99

Viral for a reason, this high-street gloss is a hero when it comes to restoring shine. I left it on for just five minutes and after rinsing it out, my hair looked far less frizzy. That said, I enjoyed the results for just two days before needing to reapply.



ORIBE MIRROR RINSE GLASS HAIR TREATMENT, £63

Okay, this one's an investment, but such a worthy one. The price stings a lot less as soon as you see the gloss-giving, detangling and deeply nourishing benefits of this Oribe icon. For anyone after the 'glass hair' effect, look no further.

BOSS YOUR GLOSS

Zoë Irwin, celebrity colourist and Glaze ambassador, gives us the low-down on all things glossy...

How often should you use a gloss?
'Hair glosses gently enhance and sometimes tone your colour, making it shine and reflect, which makes them quite foolproof and difficult to overuse.'

What should you be aware of when using a gloss for the first time?
'I like to think of a gloss as something that will illuminate and tweak your hair, not change it completely. Stay within your colour zone!'

PHOTOGRAPHY: CORY VANDERPLOEG/GALLERY STOCK

Timeless hair

Industry insiders spill the tea on the tones to know now and always

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

Trend cycles can move faster than a salon blow-dry. But great colour? That's a forever thing. The right shade doesn't just complement your cut, it reframes your persona. This season (and the next, and the next), it's less shock value and more nuance: the tones with depth, gloss with dimension and hues that, as Taylor Swift says, never go out of style.

With the help of industry insiders, we're highlighting (pun very much intended) the colours to know. Spoiler: cowboy copper still rides high, ink goes deliciously dark and buttercream blonde ushers in the warmth.



BUTTERCREAM BLONDE

Platinum has had its ice-queen moment; now it's time to melt. 'Buttercream blonde leads the shift towards warmer, creamier shades,' says celebrity hairstylist Melissa Timperley. Ask for a warm, creamy blonde with subtle face-framing highlights, a soft root shadow and a gloss for that plush finish. It's timeless because it works with your natural warmth and grows out gracefully. As Katie Freedman, colourist at Larry King Notting Hill, puts it, 'It enhances what's already there instead of fighting it – high-end beauty never goes out of fashion.'

INKY BLACK

Saturated, glassy and unapologetically deep, the shade 'ink' delivers drama without tipping into flat, one-dimensional territory. Hairstylist Tom Smith describes it as 'minimalism at its finest; the deepest colour palette that remains more luminous than true black'. Think Demi Lovato and Cardi B at their glossiest. The colour shines most on very long, healthy hair worn smooth or poker-straight – this is because the flat, aligned cuticle layer acts like a mirror, reflecting light directly and continuously.





QUIET LUXURY BRUNETTE

Chocolate hair is a classic shade that people keep coming back to. 'It's soft, glossy and dimensional, with subtle lighter pieces that blend seamlessly through the hair, says Jay Blitsas, colourist at Larry King South Kensington. James Samuel, consultant colourist at Hershesons Belgravia adds that 'the warmth brings out the colour in your eyes and it's easier to carry than darker, cooler shades'. Timperley says, 'it's smooth and indulgent, and adds depth without heaviness, warmth without redness'.

colour trends

COWBOY COPPER

Cowboy copper is golden hour in hair form – all burnished warmth and expensive shine. 'Copper shades aren't going anywhere, but this takes on a richer, more grown-up tone,' says Timperley. 'Think glowing embers rather than fiery red.' Smith calls it 'a more recent evolution in naturally occurring hair colours' that's become timeless thanks to its softness and wearability. Ask for warm copper with golden-amber undertones, softened at the root and finished with a gloss – it flatters multiple skin tones and, crucially, stands the test of time.





MODERN MUSE BLONDE

Marilyn Monroe made it iconic and it's been going strong ever since. The inspo? Lady Gaga and Alex Consani, both of whom are loving the modern-day bleach blonde shade. 'This works best when the hair is in great condition because it requires a full bleach, so treatments are non-negotiable,' says Samuel. 'The colour should look effortless and almost editorial, not hard work.'



LIVED-IN PALETTES

Consider this the art of looking stylishly undone. The lived-in palette is 'all about effortless colour, blending natural root depth with soft, wearable dimension', says Dean Harris, colourist at Larry King Marylebone. Think Sofia Richie's levels of low-maintenance glow. Ask for soft-contrast colour with seamless blends – balayage, babylights and root melts are key for movement without obvious lines. Harriet Muldoon, colourist at Larry King South Kensington, calls it a 'Sunday morning lived-in feel – cashmere tracksuit on and coffee in hand', pointing to Margot Robbie's weekend blonde.

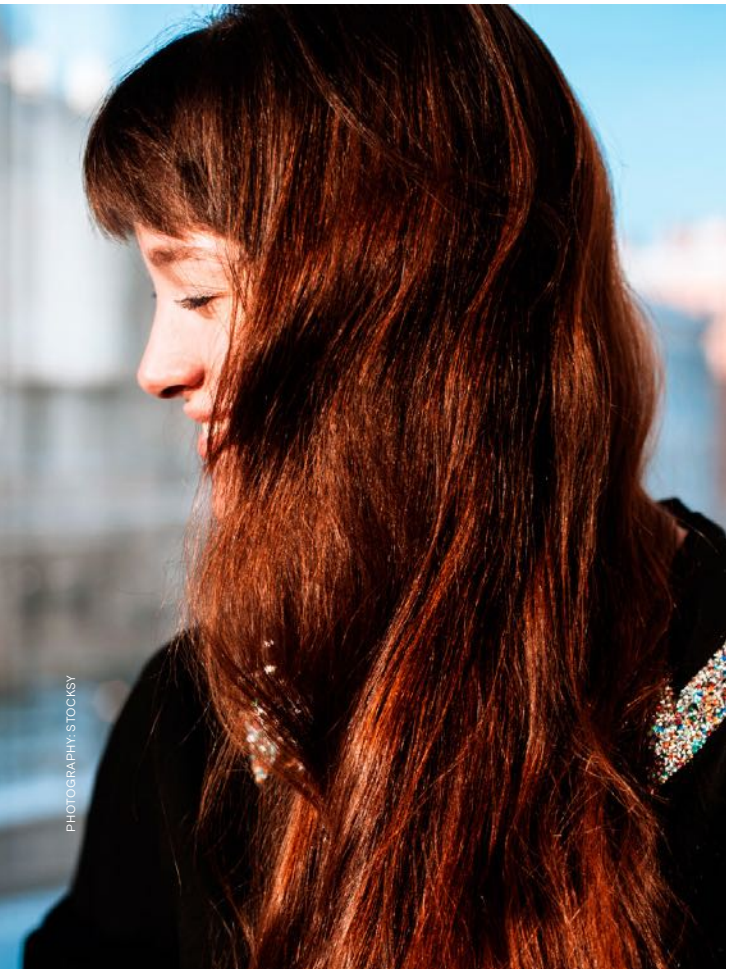
PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY

Can you make your hair grow faster?

Three trichologists reveal the hairy truth

WORDS: LIA MAPPOURA

If you've ever tried to grow your hair faster, you will know that the internet is full of bold promises and even bolder befores-and-afters. The truth? Hair growth is largely determined by genetics, hormones and health – but that doesn't mean you're powerless. You can create the right conditions for healthy, stronger growth (and less breakage along the way).



PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY

SCALP CARE IS KEY

No topical product can magically speed up growth. As trichologist Helen Reavey explains: 'Shampoos can't create hair growth... however, they can support it.' Healthy hair starts with a healthy scalp, and products are there to maintain balance, not rewrite your DNA.

'Shampoo removes build-up and balances the scalp microbiome, creating ideal conditions for healthy follicles,' says Reavey. Trichologist Hannah Gaboardi adds that cleansing helps to reduce 'inflammation and clogged pores'.



Act+ Acre Clarifying Hard Water Shampoo, £30

KNOW YOUR INGREDIENTS

Certain components in product formulas can support growth. 'Ingredients such as peppermint and caffeine help increase blood flow to the scalp,' says Gaboardi, allowing follicles to receive more oxygen and nutrients. She recommends ketoconazole to keep the scalp clear and block DHT – 'the hormone linked to pattern hair loss'. For fragile ends, keratin reinforces the hair shaft, reducing breakage and giving hair a thicker feel.



Rhute Density + Repair Scalp Serum, £55

NUTRIENTS 101

What you put into your body matters just as much. 'It's important to maintain healthy vitamin and iron levels,' says Gaboardi, noting that deficiencies can disrupt the hair growth cycle and trigger shedding. If you're undereating, stressed or low on key nutrients, hair is often the first thing your body deprioritises. If you're really worried about hair quality or loss, ask your GP about supplements, medication or dietary advice.



Vitabiotics Perfectil Plus Hair, £20

DAILY HABITS COUNT

Long-term hair health is shaped by the small, daily things that you do consistently. Trichologist Steven Goldsworthy advises 'using high-quality hair products, brushing gently to avoid breakage, trimming your hair regularly to prevent split ends and exercising caution when using chemical treatments, such as hair colouring or perms'.



Tangle Teezer The Ultimate Detangler Extra Gentle, £15

Bottom line: you can't force hair to grow faster, but you can protect what you have, reduce shedding and support healthy growth over time. Consistency, scalp care and realistic expectations? That's the real hair-growth holy trinity!

Black beauty



zero gatekeeping

Looking for beauty advice made just for you? We've got your back! From skincare and haircare tailored to Black and brown skin to the best brands with inclusive shades. Plus, discover where the professionals go for braids, wigs and weaves. Welcome to your Black Beauty Hub!

COSMOPOLITAN BLACK BEAUTY HUB

Scan the QR code to check it out

Your washday line-up, sorted

Four steps to a good hair day

WORDS: KEEKS REID

For me, washday used to be a means to an end. It needed to be done so I'd muddle through it to achieve the clean, dry hair that meant I could get on with my week. But I was never happy with the condition of my strands. Then I did my level 1 hairdressing training and it made me really think about what I want to achieve from washday. It became like my own little salon appointment where I laser-focused on the end result, which flipped everything on its head. I have the best hair of my life because I go into each wash addressing a specific concern: does my hair feel dry? Is there more breakage? Do I want gloss? Then I pick my players from there. Let me break it down...





PRE-TREAT

For a quick midweek hair wash, a pre-treatment might feel a bit laboursome, but you can always start the evening before. Whether you are doing a scalp treatment to calm down irritation or a bonding treatment on the lengths of your hair for strengthening, that extra helping hand is a worthwhile step to help you achieve your hair goals.

Hair By Sam McKnight Pure Genius Scalp Oil, £36.
Olaplex No3 Complete Repair Treatment, £32

WASH

The decision here is: do you need a heavy-duty shampoo to help with excess oils and product build-up, or something that doesn't mess with colour or dye? Or is your scalp your concern? If you wash infrequently (no judgment here, I do a weekly wash while Lia, *Cosmo* beauty writer, does hers daily), then you should be double cleansing your hair to really reset it.

Aveda Scalp Solutions Balancing Shampoo, £30.
TRESemmé Replenish & Cleanse Shampoo, £3

CONDITION

Your conditioner is what's going to treat your hair. It is super important to your end result, so here's where you address your biggest concern. Is a hydrating mask in order? Or a lightweight gloss better? The main thing is that you focus on one conditioning product. Layering on multiple masks and conditioners can leave your hair lank and flat.

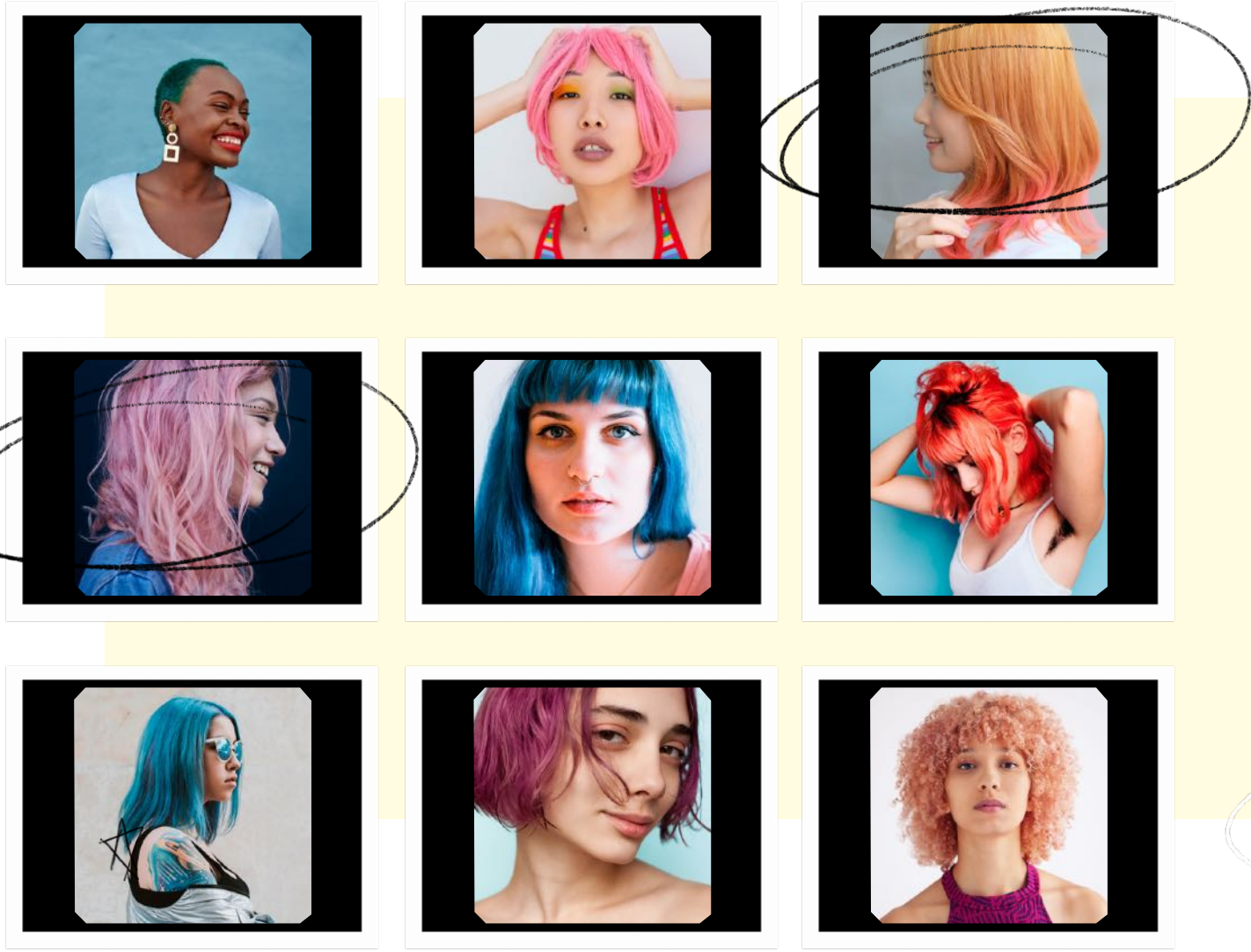
Davines OI Liquid Luster, £19.
Living Proof Moisture Rescue Mask, £36

STYLE

If you're heat-styling, protection is non-negotiable. Pick up one that has conditioning benefits to keep your washday working hard until next time and stops you having to load on multiple products. If you're air-drying, use a good cream to keep hair defined, protected and smooth, not crispy.

Kérastase Gloss Absolu Frizz-Glaze Cream For Thick Frizzy Hair, £44.
Monday Moisture Leave-In Conditioner, £5

PHOTOGRAPHY: STOCKSY



Bright hair is back! Hue knew?

Boring hair colour has hit saturation point

WORDS: KEEKS REID

Well, I remember the first wave vividly. Peak Tumblr era, with not a care in the world, individualism at the heart of the moment – what crazy colour or shade should we try next? The more vibrant the better! Now, the era of bold hair dye is back with a new wave and a 2026 energy. The reimagined trend was cleverly forecast by Bleach London founder Alex Brownsell with her Pinterest Predicts collaboration on Cool Blue hair. Though it looks the same, she's sure this trend has a new edge and less innocence than a decade ago. 'Although there is a lot of 2016 nostalgia around, I think the bold colour at the moment is less about cute curation and more about pushing back against sameness and cultural conservatism,' she says.

Why now? Well, frankly, why not? Bored of the prim and proper, we are hankering for an edge to the cut-and-paste hair colour trends we've seen over the past few years.







PHOTOGRAPHY: GALLERYSTOCK, GETTY, STOCKSY

'People are tired of "perfect" beauty standards and the clean-girl/minimal/norm-core look,' Brownsell continues. 'I've noticed people craving a messier, expressive, creative style that actually feels alive.' And the best thing about this revival is that colour innovation has come so far in the past decade. While before it was a commitment with permanent colour change, or a waxy hair chalk that would crumble away before the end of your first festival pint, nowadays there are many ways to embrace the vibe.

Does it work for you?

There is a vibrant hue for every 'do. If you want to experiment, think about the colours that you are naturally drawn to in your life. Do you prefer pinks, oranges and reds as a statement, or are blues, teals and greens more your thing? This will give you guidance on the colour family that will work with your life. 'Think about your own aesthetic and energy,' says Brownsell. 'A true bold shade should feel like an extension of your style, not a costume. Something that makes you feel more like yourself.'

A word on maintenance

Vibrant colours are always going to be harder to look after than natural, classic hair shades because they have a higher likelihood of fading. And, of course, the more hair dyed, the more hair you have to maintain.

But we don't all have to commit to blue hair in the same way North West does – you can try colour placements in face-framing layers, fringes and techniques such as balayage to work your colour. And you can opt for permanent, semi-permanent or wash-in/wash-out colour to really suit your commitment level. Also, thanks to improvements in tech, you can get bolder shades at home without having to bleach your hair for a lighter base first. 'The technology's massively improved since 2016,' says Brownsell. 'You only need to look at our No Bleach London permanent kits, which can take blonde or even dark brunette hair to a bright pink, red or cherry, without the need for any bleach.'

If you're unsure of what to go for, then book in for a consultation with a colourist. They'll be able to let you know what'll work best for your hair condition and the level of maintenance your lifestyle can handle.

THE BEST VIBRANT HAIR COLOURS

PERMANENT

BLEACH LONDON
For darker hair, it's best to head to a salon. The specialist team at Bleach London will take you to your desired colour without compromising on hair condition. Book at bleachlondon.com/salons.



SEMI-PERMANENT



Crazy Color Semi-Permanent Hair Dye, £6.45.
Bleach London Blue Tick Semi-Permanent Vegan Hair Dye, £8.95.
Schwarzkopf LIVE Colour Moment Semi-Permanent Hair Dye, £8.
Manic Panic Classic High Voltage Semi-Permanent Hair Colour Cream, £12.99

TEMPORARY



Living and Home 6 Colours Temporary Bright DIY Hair Colour Chalk Comb Set, £11.
OMY Temporary Hair Chalks, £18

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– said literally no one

COSMOPOLITAN CLUB COSMO

★★★★★
‘The best thing ever’
– the Cosmo team





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So you want to dye your hair?

Before you decide to book that appointment (or reach for the box dye), ask yourself a few crucial questions...

WORDS: URMI PANDIT



PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY

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