

This is a blog I wrote for a company that has since gone out of business. The section that discusses the product that the company was selling was taken out because it is no longer available.

The blog discusses the beauty industry, skin care products and dermatology.

The Skin You're In

Every living thing has a function – but a human being has a reason. We live in a world where beauty has been set at a very high standard. Powerful marketing and advertising begins distorting our self-image from childhood. The standard for beauty has become more and more unrealistic over the last few decades, especially the United States, leaving it up to the individual to choose if they want to adhere to growing trends or walk their own path.

The average consumer spends anywhere from \$100 to \$800 a month on beauty products. Most of the consumers at the higher end of this spectrum are woman. But men have recently started to become more involved in maintaining their appearance. The problem is, most of these beauty products don't work. So why do people still buy these products? Because the beauty industry is able to hit you where it hurts – your self-image.

Given enough exposure to mass marketing and social media, people start to form opinions and judge themselves and others based on what is now considered desirable. The companies within the industry will continue to do business this way until demands shift. The only way to change this is for the consumer to educate themselves on the truth about these products.

Although there are countless topics regarding how health and beauty are related to industry standards, this article focuses on how to improve your skin.

Some Facts About Your Skin: The Dermis

The dermis is the second major layer of skin and is comprised of two sub-layers: the papillary dermis and the reticular dermis. The dermis gives the skin strength and elasticity. It also serves as the sub-structure of the skin. The two main fibers in the dermis are collagen and elastin. This area of the skin is anywhere from six to three millimeters thick.

Notable features of the two sub-layers of the dermis are:

- **Papillary Dermis** – an arrangement of collagen fibers pushed up into the epidermis (top layer) to replace the old fibers that are constantly shedding.
- **Reticular Dermis** – thicker collagen fibers that run parallel to the epidermis.

This is the area that contains skin cells, lymphatic blood vessels, hair follicles, oil and sweat glands. These glands produce sebum, which protects your skin from bacterial growth and stops it from drying out. This area also feeds the skin via the blood vessels, removing toxins and supplying the epidermis with blood through circulation. The epidermis and dermis work together to achieve this. It is also important to note that this layer uses moisture to regulate our body temperature. Collagen and elastin are connective tissues throughout the skin.

How Wrinkles Are Formed

Age and gravity causes our skin to start losing its ability to rejuvenate and our muscle mass to deteriorate. This produces wrinkles in the muscles. As your skin ages its foundation erodes and the elastin becomes weak, causing the skin fall into the muscle. Wrinkles *do not* reside on the top layer of your skin, they reside in the muscles beneath it. This is what we see when we look in the mirror.

It is important to note there are two different types of wrinkles:

- **Static Wrinkles** – these are the wrinkles we get when we reach a certain age. They do not go away, hence the name static.
- **Dynamic Wrinkles** – these are the fine lines and wrinkles that we see when our faces are in motion; like when we laugh, cry or squint. A lot of people refer to them as crow's feet. These wrinkles usually become deeper and more static over time.

As we age, sun exposure makes the collagen thinner and elastin wears out faster. The skin becomes less elastic and does not easily snap back into shape. Your skins foundation weakens and falls into the wrinkles. Since wrinkles do not reside in the top layers of your skin where you apply creams and lotions it is only logical to ask...

Do Skin Creams Work?

There are very few over-the-counter creams that actually penetrate into the dermis. If cosmetic companies really had the ability to penetrate deep down into the dermis they would have to deal with the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) more frequently because their product would be classified as a drug, making it harder to get it out into the marketplace.

Some skin care products have ingredients that may help your skin, but they usually contain such small quantities that they either don't work, or work too slowly. Which means that not all skin care products are a complete sham (more on this later). Some products are trying to go the "natural" route and advertise themselves as chemical-free. They put a variety of ingredients in their product, but nothing that actually helps the skin. A great example of this is the term "proprietary blend." What this usually means is that they have taken ingredients available to everyone and mixed them together in a specific ratio. They sell you on the notion that more ingredients equals a better product.

Some products claim to have found a secret ingredient that no one else has stumbled across until now. This secret ingredient usually ends up being a compound plant, or herb, that has almost nothing to do with skin care. This is how undermining and illegitimate this industry can be.

So how do we enhance skin? Simple, through natural methods and a select few products. Here are some natural ways to enhance your skin:

- **Don't stay the sun too long** – the number one cumulative negative effect on the skin is sun damage. The sun provides the body with vitamin D, which is excellent for your overall health and immune system. But prolonged exposure can damage the skin. Make sure you are wearing an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of thirty or more. Sunscreen is the only thing that has been proven to directly impede the appearance of lines and wrinkles.
- **Exercise** – every time you exercise you are not only maintaining a healthy lifestyle, you are increasing circulation. When you sweat, you bring sebum to the surface. This keeps your skin young, healthy and moisturized.
- **Keep hydrated** – this not only helps remove toxins from your body, it naturally moisturizes your skin.

- **Diet** – a healthy diet will pay off, and eventually show on your skin.
- **Alcohol and smoking** – this one seems pretty self-explanatory.

Skin Care Products That Actually Work

As stated earlier, not all skin care products are a sham. For instance, hyaluronic acid, Acai Berry oil, (R)-alpha-lipoic acid, green tea extract and coconut oil are ingredients proven to penetrate the dermis over long periods of time. Retin-A is a tretinoin cream that is used to treat fine wrinkles, dark spots and rough skin patches on the face. Olive oil is one of the cheapest ingredients that you can use which truly makes a difference on your skin and your hair.