

# Easy Steps To Happy Faces

By: Karen Simpson

So often we purchase products—enticed by the promise of great skin—but we are not given a regimen to follow.

When I was 4 years old, my mom gave me my first skin-care product. It was “Happy Face,” a cold-cream cleanser that actually looked kid friendly. She proudly placed it on the sink next to the toothpaste and showed me the proper way to cleanse my skin. She reasoned that if I was old enough to care for my teeth, I was old enough to care for my skin. That small jar of Happy Face has now been replaced with scads of others, all lining my sink area. So often we purchase products—enticed by the promise of great skin—but we are not given a regimen to follow. There are a few simple steps to a basic regimen: cleanse, exfoliate, tone and moisturize. The most important part of this routine is to match up the products you use with your skin type.

## cleans

Find a cleanser that works for your skin and use it on your face and neck. There are many types of good facial cleansers ranging from creamy, gentle cleansers to gel-like cleansers with ingredients to help manage the oils. Avoid using bath bar soaps on your face and neck. Bar soap is too drying and often has extra ingredients (like anti-bacterial additives and deodorant) that are simply not necessary. Save the bar soap for the shower and use it from the neck down. Wash your face with lukewarm water to remove the excess oils and makeup; using hot or cold water on your face may cause broken capillaries. It's best to wash your face thoroughly at night and lightly cleanse it in the morning; over-cleansing can be too drying.

## exfoliate

Exfoliation is an important step to include in your skin care regimen, normally at nighttime. This helps remove the dead layers of skin and stimulate new growth. You have several options to choose from, including microdermabrasion, scrubs, applying a retinoid or chemical peels. Depending on your skin type, you might choose a gentle scrub, a mild, at-home microdermabrasion kit or a retinoid in your evening routine following cleansing. A monthly chemical peel or spa-level microdermabrasion is also good practice. You can take years off of your face with a good peel regimen. Check out the value of exfoliation by looking at men. Men often maintain their youthful look longer than women because they exfoliate on a daily basis, using a razor. You can readily see the difference in the skin that gets shaved compared to the forehead or parts that don't get shaved or moisturized. A man's forehead usually receives very little attention (in the way of exfoliation, moisturizers and protection) and often shows sun damage and other signs of aging before the rest of his face.


## tone

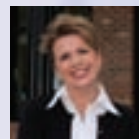
Toning your skin may be an additional important step to add, depending on your skin type. Skin-care experts differ on the importance of this step. Conventional training says applying toner helps close the pores and prepare your skin enabling your products to better penetrate your skin. Some experts feel that this is a step that can be skipped altogether. However, this is probably a step that people with acne-prone skin should not skip.

## moisturize

Moisturizing your skin cannot be overemphasized, and this step is important in daytime and nighttime routines. The only exception to this is skin with acne. It's important to find the right moisturizer that works with your skin type. Use your moisturizer according to your skin's needs. A good nighttime moisturizer helps repair your skin and prepare it for the onslaught of the next day's activities. A daytime moisturizer is also essential. Depending on your skin type, a good sunscreen may double as moisturizer and protectant.

For many of us, our skin-care regimen may include other expensive serums and creams that promise to help us reverse the signs of aging. There is a lot of science behind many of these products and they need to be worked into our routines. A good rule of thumb to follow is applying your products from thin to thick—serums to heavier creams and lotions. For example, a morning routine might be lightly cleansing, toning, and applying an anti-oxidant serum, then a light moisturizer, and finally, a sunscreen. Believe it or not, this only takes a couple of minutes. An evening routine could be cleansing, applying a retinoid (for exfoliation) and then moisturizing. Your routine depends on your skin type and the products that you are using.

I've moved beyond that single jar of Happy Face, but I still credit my mother for helping me realize the importance of skin care and teaching me how to take care of my skin. It is very important to have the right products for your skin type and equally important to understand the products and use them in a correct regime. And always, if you have questions about the right product or products to use, and how to use them, consult a skin-care expert. Stay committed—and put on a happy face! 



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