

let's get *personal*

The key to maximizing your skin's potential doesn't lie in the latest hi-tech treatment or the most expensive face cream, it lies in knowing just what *your* skin, not anyone else's, needs. *Newby Hands* shows you how to gain self-knowledge and achieve your personal best complexion

Forget game-changing ingredients or the latest cult cream, in recent years there has been only one star in the beauty business—you—as personalization has become the driving force behind an array of products, innovations and services. In 2014, 'customization' was recognized as a key worldwide beauty trend; in the same year genetic testing to create individually tailored skincare became accessible. It was, apparently, the beginning of a global revolution.

Three years on and we can start to see where this personal approach is proving relevant and useful. Undoubtedly, those

services that focus on us as individuals are appealing and practical. But, interestingly, while genetic testing becomes increasingly established in the medical, health and lifestyle arenas (and you can read more on the following pages about the impact it is having on how we exercise and what we eat), it still has a remarkably low profile in beauty. Which I find surprising as, although there's still a limit to the genes that can be tested, it can still provide previously unobtainable information about the potential longevity, or otherwise, of the look of our skin. And given how we now love to tailor our skincare on an almost daily basis – mixing up and layering on serums, creams and masks – surely knowing exactly what we should be tailoring it to makes sense. But technology aside, according to the experts, simply taking a more individual approach to something as mundane as how we clean our face is, apparently, a vital step to having great skin. As gaining self-knowledge on our health and beauty becomes integral to achieving our individual best, and the market for those providing these insights and services grows, knowing where to get reliable information or the best personalized products is key. >

the gene test Launched with fanfare and a rock-star backer, GeneU was the first company to offer skincare created for your genetic blueprint, but after a few years it's all a bit more low-key. After taking a simple cheek swab (at its London HQ, or via a kit in the post), you are tested for two genes linked to skin aging: one showing the activity of collagenase which destroys healthy collagen, the other levels of antioxidant protection. Linking your lifestyle with your test results you can then have a set of two serums tailored to your skin's genetic requirements.

But surprisingly, although providing new insight into our skin, this type of testing has had at best a lukewarm reception in the beauty industry. In fact, virtually all the experts I mention it to seem disinterested, often viewing it as irrelevant. But having been tested myself, I see it as hugely relevant, giving clarity into the current state of my skin and how it will fare in the future. The tests showed that I have excellent antioxidant activity, but my collagen – the skin's vital support – is at high risk of being destroyed; I am not what we call an 'exceptional ager'. This information allows us to seek advice and form a prevention plan – in my case, daily vitamin C and regular radio frequency to boost collagen. As Dr Martin Stow, CEO of GeneU, says "The more information you have, the better you know what you are working with." For the cost of an average face cream (\$116 for the test only – the serums are optional and cost much more), you discover concrete information that allows you to make choices based on fact, not guesswork or the latest fad and surely that can only be a good thing?

Of course, as with all genetic testing this is only part of our story; call it nature vs nurture, or in this case, genetics vs epigenetics (how external factors affect the way genes express themselves), as the skin we are genetically born with is not necessarily the one we grow old with. There are numerous studies illustrating the dramatic difference in skin aging on the faces of genetically identical twins, one of whom has lived in the desert sun or smoked and the other who lived somewhere cold or wore sun block.

Like most genetic testing companies, GeneU also sells bespoke serums, each tailored to help protect your skin's

genetic makeup from external aggressors – but I am not enthusiastic about these. There are no surprises on the ingredient list and certainly nothing to truly excite me as a beauty director, so while GeneU may excel in genetics that will inform my skincare choices, I am sticking with those companies who already excel in skincare and the products I love, namely Estée Lauder's anti-inflammatory Advanced Night Repair serum mixed daily with Dr Sebagh's Vitamin C powder to protect and repair my collagen. geneu.com

personalize your regime Mixing up our daily skincare and working out what to use and why can be confusing. But the reality is, when

it comes to tailoring our regime, it is more a matter of adjusting the texture (more nourishing oil post-flight, more light serums in warm weather and so on), than the ingredients. For when it comes to the main causes of skin damage, we all need the same key actives to protect against the global external aggressors. It is about what New York-based Dr Nadine Pernodet, vice president of Skin Biology & BioActives at Estée Lauder, calls "the master pathways. These are the factors that affect every one of us – DNA repair, the circadian rhythm (disrupted by lack of sleep), plus pollution and UV. They play a huge part in accelerating skin aging as they impact on all of us," she explains. "The difference is how we show that damage. On Chinese skin, pollution shows as pigmentation, on a Caucasian skin as wrinkles." So in the same way that we know the value of a daily SPF, we should be adding hydration, in the form of hyaluronic acid, a good cocktail of protective antioxidants, especially for city dwellers, and collagen-boosting vitamin C to the list of non-negotiable requirements for a good skin.

Surprisingly, the one area that does need a more personalized approach is often the most overlooked; cleansing. "This is where good skin starts," according to Dr Pernodet. "People see it as something mundane, but it's the first step in skin treatment and if you get it wrong it leads to issues like sensitivity and dryness." Interestingly, it is the part of skincare on which all the experts I spoke to were unanimous: how you cleanse dictates the health >

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of your skin. “Toner is not part of cleansing; your skin should be clean before you get to this step,” says Dallas-based aesthetician Joanna Czech. “If your skin feels tight, taut or sensitive you are over cleansing. I love balms or oils as they break through makeup and dirt but don’t strip skin.” While it seems counterintuitive, they also work beautifully for oily skin as oil dissolves oil. Sunday Riley Blue Moon Tranquility Cleansing Balm, \$50, is beautiful to use and for a natural oil cleanser I recommend Votary Cleansing Oil, \$72. Conversely, obsessive peeling and over-cleaning on an oily skin only stimulates more oil. Double cleansing can transform a dull skin; step one removes the makeup, step two cleans the skin. But the idea is to clean off the dirt, not strip away the protective layer of oils, so go gently. Skin left flaky and sensitized from hard water is increasingly difficult to avoid. “It’s proving a real challenge as the calcium deposits leave skin so dry and dull,” says New York dermatologist Dr Dennis Gross. For those who like the feeling of water on their skin, Micellar Water cleansers are excellent and suitable for any skin type—I love La Mer’s Cleansing Micellar Water, \$90. Using droplets of oil suspended in soft water, they deep-clean but without stripping skin. For some, this simple swap can quickly clear up patches of redness, irritation and dryness.

the skin scan In the quest for self-knowledge, the in-clinic Visia Complexion Analysis machine provides a snapshot of your skin, highlighting underlying issues the eye does not yet see. Taking only a few minutes to scan a clean face, it documents texture, wrinkles (the difference between my scan post-Botox and six months later is quite astounding on the wrinkle count), pores and areas of rosacea, bacteria and pigmentation. “It helps show me the underlying issues,” explains London-based Dr Tapan Patel. “So if treating rosacea, it lets me see other areas where it may not yet be visible but which I can start to treat.” It can also give you a glimpse into the future of your skin. A friend with a famously creamy complexion attributes its clarity to a “skin-transforming” Visia session. Seeing a mass of subsurface pigmentation gave her the knowledge to transform her skin

regime by upping the SPF’s and incorporating daily antioxidants to protect and vitamin C to repair.

the ultimate cream Following the success of the PRP (platelet-rich plasma) treatment, AKA vampire facial, which re-injects your blood plasma to treat thinning hair, damaged joints and aging skin, Dr Barbara Sturm pioneered the first platelet-rich face cream. After drawing several vials of your blood, these are placed in a centrifuge to separate out the plasma which is incubated to increase levels of the healing growth factors. This is then mixed into a simple shea butter cream base and delivered back to you several days later. Do not be deceived by the simple plastic tub and hand-written label stating little more than your name and that of the cream, MC1; this is incredibly potent skincare. “The growth factors cascade into the skin, stimulating collagen and reducing inflammation,” explains Dr Sturm, who works between Los Angeles, London and Düsseldorf. Expect a real change in the quality and glow of your skin—those who use it rave about it. dr-barbara-sturm.com

the personal face trainer For those who are already a fan of the excellent FaceGym Pro home-use device (worked over the face, this smart gadget uses a macro current to firm up facial contours), its new FaceCamp, available at the London and New York stores, provides a personalized and intensive program of treatments. After a one-to-one consultation to outline what you want to improve, a treatment program is devised to achieve it – but don’t expect soothing facials, this is beauty bootcamp. Strong hands-on massage to depuff, lasers to even and tone up, oxygen to brighten, radio frequency to firm, wrinkle combs to smooth and the Face Pro to firm can all be used as needed. If time is short and results are needed fast then commit to three treatments a week over a minimum two-week course. You also get a bespoke face oil, supplements and nutritional advice, plus ‘homework’, with a tailored program for the FaceGym Pro and, if needed, facial exercises. facegym.com ■

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