



PHOTOS BY ARTHUR LEE

**Dr Yuen:** 'It's easier to maintain good skin than to restore bad skin'

## How not to let your skin give away your age

By **TAN SU YEN**

WHEN anti-ageing creams priced at \$1,000 a jar made their debut here recently, some balked at the prices and others rationalised that the super luxurious creams were an investment in their future. Another group of women, notably the savvy, private banking clients also known as *tai tais*, not only lapped up the creams, but also went through them in double quick time, lavishly slathering the rich, expensive potions onto their hands as well as their faces.

Extravagant? Definitely, but a smart move, assuming money is no object. The skin on our hands, like the skin on our faces, tends to show the most visible signs of ageing compared with the skin on the less exposed parts of our bodies like our inner thighs for example. The culprit? Sun damage, the single most potent cause of what dermatologists refer to as extrinsic ageing.

Says Dr Patricia Yuen, consultant dermatologist, Pacific Healthcare Specialist Centre: "The sun causes free radical damage which can affect collagen production. In Asian women, sun exposure accentuates pigmentation problems that are caused by hormonal imbalances during pregnancy and menopause."

Those are certainly problems we could all do without when you consider how no one is spared the toll the passing years take on our skin. Dr Yuen explains the relentless process of intrinsic aging: "The skin is made up of three layers, the epidermis which is the topmost layer of the skin, the dermis and fat. As people get older, the natural exfoliation process in the epidermis is not so efficient and it doesn't retain moisture as well as it used to. As a result, the skin gets rougher and dryer."

"The dermis is the support system for the skin; it is made up of collagen and elastin fibres, which gives the skin its firmness and elasticity. As we age, the collagen layer decreases so there is less support for the skin and wrinkles start to form. Tissue shrinkage combined with gravity also leads to sagging and the appearance of groove lines."

The key to staving off the inevitable, or at the very least limiting its damage, lies in maintenance. Says Dr Yuen: "It's easier to maintain good skin than to restore bad skin." All the same, being religious about your skincare regime is just half the equation, the other part of it lies in selecting the right products for your skin, and these need not be the latest or most expensive products available.

Says Dr Yuen: "Even with something very basic like a moisturiser, it is important to use a suitable moisturiser for your skin. You don't want to use a moisturiser that is too thick or too rich for your skin or for our weather. I have patients who get oil seeds from using expensive creams designed for cooler climates and drier Caucasian skin."

And given all the evidence about sun damage, both men and women shouldn't leave home without sun block. Says Dr Yuen: "I am a big advocate of sun block and would recom-

mend it for every one. Sun block technology is now very advanced so you don't just slap on any sun block. If your desk is by the window in the office and most of your walking is from the car to the office, I would recommend an SPF 20. If you golf or do water sports, consider an SPF 60 that is specially formulated for sports."

Maintenance aside, people with sun-damaged, aging or problem skin now have recourse to an entire repertoire of non-invasive cosmetic dermatology treatments. And just as well. According to Dr Yuen, patients are increasingly opting for procedures that involve no knives, little or no downtime and no big surprises. "People like treatments that retain the way they look or subtly enhance their features. They don't want any drastic changes."

Some of the more popular non-invasive aesthetic dermatology procedures at Dr Yuen's practice are:

### eLaser & eLight

These new generation treatments combine intense pulse light technologies with radio frequency energy to improve skin texture and colour more efficiently and less painfully than previous techniques. The eLight or Aurora is intended for reducing pigmentation, spider veins and for skin rejuvenation while eLaser or Polaris is used for wrinkle and scar removal.

### Iontophoresis

This treatment involves applying a Vitamin C serum onto the skin followed by a low level electrical current that increases the depth of penetration of Vitamin C. A powerful antioxidant, Vitamin C repairs the skin's damaged collagen and lightens deep pigmentation.

### Sciton MicroLaserPeel

The most advanced laser resurfacing technique, the MicroLaserPeel uses an epidermal laser to smooth scars, ablate fine lines, tighten pores and remove blemishes. It is effective for overall facial rejuvenation as it gently "peels" problematic skin and promotes healthy vibrant skin growth. It is also known as the "weekend" peel as healing takes two to three days.



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