

Everything You Need to Know about Moisturizing

Great-looking skin is easy—if you follow these simple steps to keeping it smooth and supple

If you've ever weighed the merits of moisturizing your skin, wear a pair of leather shoes for a few months without conditioning them and see what happens. Over time, cracks, deep crevices, and a general wear will age even that tough and tanned cowhide. Your much less resilient skin needs regular protection and care to keep it looking fresh. "The interesting thing about skin care for men is that it often takes very little to make a big improvement," says Kathleen M. Welsh, M.D., a San Francisco-based dermatologist. "So just using something other than bar soap on your face, or moisturizing twice a day makes such a huge difference." Here, the quick and easy steps to making your skin soft and smooth —and the **best moisturizing products** to keep them that way.

Start with a clean (but not too clean) surface

Removing surface dirt and oil is the first step in allowing any moisturizer to penetrate your skin's surface. Cleansing twice a day, morning and night, is a good idea, says Dr. Jarrod Paul Frank, a Manhattan-based dermatologist. But don't get carried away by using heavy-duty scrubs more than once or twice a week. These will only irritate the skin and stimulate oil production.

For daily use, a milder soap means your skin will need less moisturizer, since it won't be scrubbed of essential oils. "Bar soaps strip the skin of oil, instead of gently removing dirt, like foaming cleansers," suggests Dr. Welsh. Try a mild face wash, like **Neutrogena's Ultra Gentle Daily Cleanser** in colder, drier months and a deeper cleaning scrub, like **Nivea Men Original Moisturizing Face Wash** in sweatier, humid climates.

Know your skin type

"In general, men should keep their regimen as simple as possible," suggests Dr. Frank. But not one size fits all. Knowing what kind of skin you have is the first step in determining that regimen and your moisturizing needs.

How can you tell your skin type? Sensitive skin reddens easily and stings or burns when you apply most products. For the other types, the condition of your T Zone (across your forehead and a straight line down your chin) will help you identify which category you fit in. At the end of the day, examine the area. A matte surface means dry skin, a greasy or shiny zone translates to oily, and if your face is just slightly slick, you have normal or combination skin.

- **Dry**—Use a moisturizing cleanser and follow up with a rich moisturizer. As long as acne is not an issue, oil-based lotions are a good choice, especially at night.
- **Oily**—Avoid any heavy or oil-based formulas. Instead, use an oil-free or mattifying moisturizer in the morning and just a lightweight serum at night.
- **Normal/ Combination**—The trick to treating this variable skin is creating balance. Aim for a medium-weight product that maintains moisture but doesn't add oil to already shiny areas.
- **Sensitive**—Avoid irritating ingredients, such as alcohol, fragrances, dyes, and preservatives (parabens). Moisturize twice daily with mild products specifically designed for sensitive skin.

Revive it at night

Night is an essential time to renew your mind—and your skin. Adding a lotion before bed creates softer, more hydrated, and better-looking skin the next day. It also helps seal in moisture and repairs the skin barrier that's compromised by dry air and harsh cleansers. Think ahead and use products with targeted ingredients that can help slow down the signs of aging. "At bedtime most men can benefit from using a skin treatment lotion that has retinol (Vitamin A), or other anti-aging creams or serums, such as alpha hydroxyl, glycolic acid, or peptides for anti-aging," says Dr. Welsh.

Seek shade

No matter how much you moisturize your skin, low levels of UV exposure add up over long periods of time. "The leading cause of skin damage is not wearing sunscreen," says Dr. Joshua Zeichner, director of Cosmetic and Clinical Research at Mt. Sinai Medical Center. Don't stow your sunscreen after the summer ends. "Hindsight is 20/20 but you need foresight to protect the skin against UV damage," he says. Hit two targets with one product and look for moisturizers with built-in sunscreen—SPF 30 or higher.

Keep your eye on your eyes

The skin around your eyes is sensitive, extremely delicate, and prone to wrinkling. Repetitive actions, such as squinting, rubbing your eyes, and vigorously drying your face with a towel will eventually come home to roost in crow's feet. Halt the damage and add an eye cream with hyaluronic acid or vitamin E to your regimen at night. Tap it on gently with your ring finger rather than rubbing it in with your index finger. Collagen-boosting retinol will also temporarily fill crevices to keep those peepers looking perky.

Cover your body

Hot showers, bar soaps, and dry air can take their toll on your body—especially your knees, elbows, and extremities, so use a body cream to replenish moisture. The best time to apply lotion is when your skin is in a humid environment, says Dr. Welsh. "When you jump out of the shower, your skin is fully hydrated, so you want to apply a moisturizer to seal that moisture to your skin," she says. Don't neglect knees, elbows, feet, and especially hands, which may require an extra squirt of balm to keep them soft—and appealing to your partner.