

As a responsible *eve* reader with a phobia of crow's feet, you're unlikely to be caught out in the sun without sunscreen, even if it's just the SPF in your everyday moisturiser. Thanks to greater awareness and state-of-the-art products, we are now experts in keeping our complexions as youthful as possible. We're spending more on cleansers, toners and moisturisers than ever before and most women over 25 own at least one anti-ageing face cream. Yet stats show that only one third of British women uses a body moisturiser regularly. So, as we hold back the clock on our faces, is time running away with our bodies? How are you doing from the neck down?

'Women think that the skin on their bodies is stronger,' says Australian skincare expert Cindy Lever of anti-ageing brand Beta Alistine. 'And it's simply not the case.' Experts agree that key areas of our bodies can now be bigger giveaways to our age than our faces. Don Frey, Vice President of Research & Development at Avon explains: 'Hands, neck, upper chest, arms and feet are becoming common problem-areas for women. After all, we're now wearing sunblock on our faces and clothes on the rest of our bodies, but these areas are usually left bare and unprotected in the sun.'

It seems that, just as with our faces, the sun, whether it's shining brightly or hiding behind a cloud, is the biggest threat to our bodies' skin, causing 70 to 90 per cent of the skin's slackening, hyperpigmentation (sun spots) and rough texture. 'The sun worshipper who hasn't taken adequate preventative measures will pay the price later with wrinkled, unevenly pigmented skin,' says Beverley Mogford of



What's giving your age away?

Never mind your face. Public enemy number one is... your elbows! Key areas of your body are actually the biggest giveaways of your age. Here's how to fight back

The International Dermal Institute. 'And the most exposed areas, such as hands, feet, throat and chest, as well as the face, are the first to show these signs.'

But new theories suggest that the skin on our bodies is under threat from more than UV rays. Clinique's guiding dermatologist Dr David Orentreich now believes our diets, perhaps unsurprisingly, also play a part in the ageing process. 'A diet too high in sugar or simple carbohydrates (pasta, bread, cakes), which turn to sugar, may have a negative effect

on how skin looks and how fast it ages,' he says. 'The skin is made up of structural proteins such as elastin and collagen fibres. The more sugar in your body, the more you force a chemical reaction, causing sugars to attach to proteins – and this is detrimental to the skin. If the elastic fibres are bound to sugar, they won't be as flexible and may be more prone to degeneration.' Dr Orentreich believes that fresh vegetables rich in antioxidants, combined with proteins such as meat and dairy, may be healthier for our skins. Beverley

Mogford also recommends a healthy diet in conjunction with skin-saving supplements, such as vitamins A, C, E and P [bioflavonoid complex], as well as newer anti-ageing antioxidants such as Q10 and Kinetin. 'Research has shown these to be exceptionally effective in treating the results of ageing on the skin's structure,' she says.

Neck and throat

Our necks and throats show their age through fine necklace lines and a loss of firmness, or the dreaded 'turkey neck'. According to Don Frey, this is almost always a straightforward case of sun damage. 'Many women apply sunscreen from the chin up,' he says, 'and then go out in an open collar shirt.' The ultraviolet light from the sun has a perfect spot to attack the collagen fibres that give our skin a plump, healthy look. The result can be a two-tier complexion, where the face is soft, but the neck is crêpey and wrinkled. The best >

truth in beauty

preventative measure is to wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a minimum SPF 15 on the neck, taking it right down your chest. 'It's the best and most important advice I can give anyone,' says Cindy Lever. 'It may seem a pain to put long hair up while you slather cream on your neck, but it's really worth it.'

Décolletage

'Because we tend to expose our décolletage to sunlight during summer, the skin here is one of the first areas to show visible ageing,' says Conni Caryesford at Imedeen, the anti-ageing vitamin and antioxidant supplement. 'These signs typically appear as fine lines running down the chest towards the cleavage. Using perfumes with alcohol, in addition to sun exposure, also leaves skin dry,' she warns.

Although women in the rest of Europe pay attention to the bust during their normal routine, British women tend to overlook this area. Don Frey believes the best treatment is good old moisturising with a product rich in antioxidants like vitamins C and E. 'To a large extent the skin on the décolletage is supporting the bust, so it can appear stretched,' he says. 'A good moisturiser will make skin more supple and less likely to burn.'

Hands, arms and elbows

'The easiest way to tell a woman's age is to look at her hands,' says Don Frey. Hands age in similar ways to the face, with depleted collagen and elastin (the fibre that makes skin springy) causing age spots and lines. But, as Frey points out, your hands can have an extra enemy to contend with: 'Smoking has a massive effect. You can usually see the difference between a smoker's and a non-smoker's hands.' Dr David Orentrich explains, 'Chemicals in cigarette smoke damage the cells, so they make collagen more slowly and poorly.' Arms and elbows can also show signs of ageing, but Frey is eager to point out that skincare products can make a real difference: 'Though sun damage often affects forearms, it tends to happen more slowly, as our arms are often covered up,' he explains. 'But you can see dramatic results just from using a good body product.' Choose ones with the same technology as face products.

Bottoms, thighs and tummies

According to Beverley Mogford there's a reason why bottoms, thighs and knees appear slacker as the skin ages. 'There's a reduction in blood flow in the skin and the subcutaneous tissues, contributing to a loss of skin firmness and encouraging cellulite.' This, combined with the fact our underlying muscles shrink, can give bums and thighs a looser appearance. But a little extra effort and TLC can pay off.

“The easiest way to tell a woman's age is to look at her hands... and smoking has a massive effect”



Don't neglect your décolletage. It's another area that quickly shows signs of ageing

Exercise, though not strictly affecting the skin, does tone muscles, to give the illusion of tight skin. 'Dry body brushing and exfoliation are also key, as they speed skin-cell renewal,' explains Mogford. Though the jury is out on whether cellulite can be cured, exfoliation and massage help improve its appearance.

Knees, legs and feet

The skin on your feet and legs has fewer sebaceous glands producing moisture. 'Lower legs and feet are often neglected,' says Conni Caryesford. 'But they don't escape visible signs of ageing, which tend to manifest as dry flaky skin, especially on the shins.' As well as good nutrition and supplements, Don Frey believes regular moisturising is critical, as is drinking water (at least 1.5 litres a day). 'The body needs water to regulate its temperature,' he explains. 'If you're not giving it enough water by drinking, it'll steal it from your skin.'

So the bottom line is clear: to keep our bodies youthful we should wear sunscreen (all over, every day), stop smoking, eat well, exfoliate and drink water. Quite simply, live a healthy life and your skin will benefit, too. □

OUR TOP SIX CREAMS

Choose your weapon

- ◆ **Avon Retro Active For Body, 150ml, £12** Helps reduce signs of sun damage – and £3 goes to Breakthrough Breast Cancer.
- ◆ **Estée Lauder Re-Nutriv Intensive Lifting Body Crème, 250ml, £100** Followers swear by this firming, hydrating, anti-wrinkle, anti-cellulite, spider vein and stretch-mark formula.
- ◆ **Beta Alistine Age Delete Body Zone, 250ml, £32.50** As used by Kylie, the key ingredient is Beta Alistine, a molecule in human tissue, to help skin cells reproduce.
- ◆ **Clinique Stop Signs Hand Repair, 75ml, £13** Use before bed to target wrinkles, age spots and crêpy skin.
- ◆ **BeneFit Bathina Sandal Scandal! 130ml, £27.50** The AHAs in this night treatment exfoliate and revitalise dry feet.
- ◆ **L'Oréal Plénitude Nutrilift, 250ml, £5.99** For arms, legs, feet and elbows, it has the same active ingredients as Plénitude's anti-ageing face creams.