BEAUTY MYTHS

Facing facts

We've become pretty good at separating beauty truth from beauty fiction, but some myths stubbornly persist. So we called in the experts to tackle seven of the biggest misconceptions when it comes to your skin

By **CAITLIN AGNEW** | *Photography by* **DANIEL EHRENWORTH**

MYTH #1

Using makeup with SPF means you can skip the sunscreen

In addition to causing 80 to 90 percent of all skin cancers, sun exposure is the number-one culprit of skin aging. So if you're looking for multi-tasking products that offer suncare and help your complexion, remember that not all sunscreens are created equal. "The majority of makeup will have an SPF of 15 or 20. That's inadequate," says Montreal-based dermatologist Dr. Roni Munk. Look for products that have a mineral base with physical blockers (like zinc or titanium dioxide), UVA and UVB protection and an SPF of at least 30. And don't skimp on application. "The problem is that most of us use a tiny bit, so we get only a small amount of SPF protection," says Dr. Shannon Humphrey of Vancouver cosmetic dermatology clinic Carruthers & Humphrey.

MYTH #2

An expensive cream is better than a cheap one

"I'm so surprised at what people will shell out for certain creams," says cosmetic physician Dr. Diane Wong of Glow Medi Spa in Toronto. (She blames branding and marketing for the high price tags.) Wong recommends scheduling regular consultations with a dermatologist to find out which ingredients your skin needs at which times of the year. As you would at the grocery store, read labels and pay attention to how much of each active ingredient is in the cream. "Customization of the appropriate products is the most important thing, not the price," Wong says.

MYTH #3

If your mother aged well, so will you

What your mama gave you is a huge factor in aging, but so are your lifestyle choices. "My mother has beautiful skin because she grew up in Asia, where it was fashionable to carry an umbrella," says Wong. While UV rays may be the biggest contributor to skin aging, influences like stress, sleep, diet, smoking and pollution can make you age in ways your mom didn't. "We have many different environmental factors than our mothers did, so we can't make assumptions," says Humphrey.

MYTH #4

You can catch eczema

Eczema is a general name for irritation or inflammation of the skin. According to the Canadian Dermatology Association, atopic dermatitis, the most common type of eczema, affects up to 17 percent of Canadians. It can be caused by any number of factors, such as an allergic reaction or overactive immune system, and it can be hereditary, but it's definitely not something you can catch or pass along to someone else. "Usually, the underlying cause is a defect in the skin barrier," says Munk. "You tend to lose more water through the skin, and because of that, it's very easy to get this inflammatory reaction that causes eczema."

MYTH #5

Naturally derived ingredients are safer

As we become better informed about the effects of processed and GMO foods on our health, we're also reconsidering the effects of chemical products on our skin. But natural doesn't always mean safe, nor does it mean it's right for your skin's needs. "Snake venom is very natural, but obviously it's poisonous," says Munk. Wong adds, "Some natural products may be good for some people's skin, but not for others."

MYTH #6

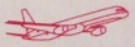
Drinking water moisturizes your skin

Staying hydrated definitely helps the health of your skin, but it won't make much of a difference to your dermal hydration levels. "When we drink water, a lot of that water goes to the inside of the body, to the organs and the blood," says Munk. To keep skin hydrated, your best bet is to reach for a moisturizer. If your skin is particularly dry, look for serums, which penetrate deeper; use hydrating masks, especially during dry winter months and during flights; and exfoliate so that your skin can better absorb all of a product's active ingredients.

MYTH #7

Staring at your computer can make you look older

While you may feel worn down after a long day at work, there are no published studies that show that rays from your computer or phone screens give you wrinkles. However, Wong does say that over the past five years or so, she's seen an uptick in twentysomething women coming to her clinic with concerns of frown lines. "If you're on the computer all day, you tend to frown because you're concentrating," she says. When you notice a furrowed brow, take a break from your screen and reset your expression.



Travelling east across time zones is harder on our system than travelling west, causing more severe jet lag and drier skin. That's because our natural circadian rhythm lasts slightly longer than 24 hours, so it's easier for us to extend the length of the day than shorten it.