

Golden rays our worst enemy in fight against ageing

Prevention beats cure when it comes to ageing skin, so break out the sunscreen and watch your diet, writes Erin Munro.

While changes to skin elasticity and appearance are a natural part of getting older, experts say that sometimes the biggest causes of skin damage aren't simply due to having lived more years – they're environmental. Luckily, there are steps individuals can take to minimise the signs of premature ageing in their body's largest organ.

"We live in a very hostile environment. Everything we encounter is attempting to do us damage," says associate professor Greg Goodman, principal dermatologist at the Dermatology Institute of Victoria.

When it comes to the number one hostile element that causes skin damage, Goodman points to sun exposure. The sun's ultraviolet light is made up of two types of rays, both harmful: UVA and UVB. The former is responsible for freckles, pigmentation and wrinkles, while the latter causes sunburn and skin cancers.

Pollution, diet, and lifestyle habits such as drinking alcohol and smoking are other factors that Goodman says can harm the skin and cause broken blood vessels, uneven skin tone, age spots and wrinkles around the eyes, mouth and the forehead.

"We always say prevention is better than a cure," says Gry Tomte, founder and owner of Melbourne skincare clinic Hud Skin + Body. She recommends those concerned about premature ageing begin by applying sunscreen daily, no matter the weather.

"Sunscreen is the number one anti-ageing tool," she explains. "Exposure to UVA and UVB accounts for 90 per cent of premature ageing, and re-applying sunscreen is a must throughout the day."



Tomte also recommends cutting back on sugar intake, as high-sugar diets can lead to the development of fine lines – a process termed "glycation" – and ensuring that you're eating enough healthy, unsaturated fats, found in foods such as

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avocados, nuts and fatty fish, to aid in production of healthy cells and skin barrier function.

A daily skincare regime can also go a long way in encouraging healthy-looking skin.

"Your choice in skincare should depend on your skin type – normal, oily, dry or combination – however for most men and women, a cleanser, moisturiser, and daily sunblock, as well as morning and overnight active products, can help with skin ageing," says Goodman.

Active products that he recommends include vitamin A, which works to prevent fine lines and minimise pores.

Applying antioxidants such as vitamin C and B in the morning can also help maximise the skin's defences and guard against external factors such as pollution.

For those who'd like to take the fight against premature ageing a step further, there's a range of in-clinic treatments to both prevent skin ageing and correct existing damage.

Popular treatments in Tomte's clinic include skin peels, hydradermabrasion, LED light therapy, and the latest in anti-ageing treatments, micro-needling, which involves use of fine needles to create tiny, micro-injuries in the skin, a process that then encourages the body to produce new collagen and elastin.

"Micro-needling is our treatment of choice when it comes to reversing the signs of ageing," Tomte says. "The result is a thickened dermis, strong elastin and collagen fibres and a strengthened capillary network."