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**The Maharishi Ayurveda Approach to Beauty and Skin Care with Nancy Lonsdorf M.D.**

**By Nancy Lonsdorf M.D.**

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"Every person is born perfect. Inferiority is a mistake of the mind, a cloud covering the light. Dissolve the clouds by observing a balanced life with healthy habits. Nourish your mind and body. Connect with your own inner self. Celebrate your own magnificence and your beauty will always shine through." -----  
Dr. Rama Kant Mishra, renowned Ayurvedic physician and dermatologist

The Three Pillars of Beauty

Maharishi Ayurveda (MAV), the modern, consciousness-based revival of the ancient Ayurvedic medicine tradition, considers true beauty to be supported by three pillars; Outer Beauty, Inner Beauty and Lasting Beauty. Only by enhancing all three can we attain the balanced state of radiant health that makes each of us the most fulfilled and beautiful person we can be.

Outer Beauty: Roopam

The outer signs of beauty – your skin, hair and nails – are more than just superficial measures of beauty. They are direct reflections of your overall health. These outer tissues are created by the inner physiological processes involved in digestion, metabolism and proper tissue development. Outer beauty depends more on the strength of your digestion and metabolism, the quality of your diet, and the purity of your blood, than on external cleansers and conditioners you may apply.

General Recommendations for Outer Beauty

As we will discuss, the key to skin care is matching your diet and skin care routine to the specific skin type you have. Meanwhile, there are some valuable recommendations for lustrous skin, hair and nails that will be helpful to everyone, regardless of skin type.

1. Diet: Without adequate nourishment, your collagen layer thins and a kind of wasting takes place. Over time, your skin can shrivel up like a plant without water from lack of nourishment. To keep your skin plump and glowing:

A. Eat fresh, whole organic foods that are freshly prepared.

Avoid packaged, canned, frozen, processed foods and leftovers. These foods have little nutritional value and also they are often poorly digested which creates impurities that localize in the skin. The resulting buildup of toxins causes irritation and blocks circulation depriving the skin of further nourishment and natural cleansing processes.

B. Favor skin nourishing foods. Leafy green vegetables contain vitamins, minerals (especially iron and calcium) and are high in antioxidant properties. They nourish the skin and protect it from premature aging. Sweet juicy fruits like grapes, melons, pears, plums and stewed apples at breakfast are excellent for the skin in almost everyone. Eat a wide variety of grains over different meals and try

mixed grain servings at breakfast and lunch. Add amaranth, quinoa, cous cous, millet and barley to the wheat and rice you already eat. Favor light, easy to digest proteins like legume soups (especially yellow split mung dhal), whole milk, paneer (cheese made from boiling milk, adding lemon and straining solids) and lassi (diluted yogurt and spice drinks). Oils like ghee (clarified butter) and organic, extra virgin olive oil should be included in the diet as they lubricate, nourish and create lustre in the skin. Use spices like turmeric, cumin, coriander, and black pepper to improve digestion, nourish the skin and cleanse it of impurities. Avoid microwaving and boiling your vegetables. They lose as much as 85% of their antioxidant content when cooked in this way. Steaming and sautéing are best.

Caring for outer beauty through knowledge of skin type

Besides these general recommendations the key to Outer Beauty is to understand the difference in skin types so you can gain the maximum benefit from your individualized skin care regimen. MAV identifies three different skin types based on which of the three main metabolic principles (doshas)—present in everyone, but to different degrees— is most dominant in your body.

Vata Skin

\* Description: Vata is composed of the elements of air and space. If you have a vata skin type, your skin will be dry, thin, fine pored, delicate and cool to the touch. When balanced, it glows with a delicate lightness and refinement that is elegant and attractive. When vata skin is imbalanced, it will be prone to excessive dryness and may even be rough and flaky.

\* Potential problems: The greatest beauty challenge for vata skin is its predisposition to symptoms of early aging. Your skin may tend to develop wrinkles earlier than most due to its tendency to dryness and thinness. If your digestion is not in balance, your skin can begin to look dull and grayish, even in your 20's and 30's. In addition, your skin may have a tendency for disorders such as dry eczema and skin fungus. Mental stress, such as worry, fear and lack of sleep, has a powerful debilitating effect on vata skin leaving it looking tired and lifeless.

\* Recommendations for care

With a little knowledge, you can preserve and protect the delicate beauty of your vata type skin. Since your skin does not contain much moisture, preventing it from drying is the major consideration. Eat a warm, unctuous diet (ghee and olive oil are best) and favor sour, salty and sweet tastes (naturally sweet like fruits, not refined sugar) as they balance vata. Avoid drying foods like crackers. Drink 6–8 glasses of warm (not cold for vata types!) water throughout the day and eat plenty of sweet, juicy fruits. Going to bed early (before 10 PM) is very soothing to vata and will have a tremendously positive influence on your skin. Avoid cleansing products that dry the skin (like alcohol-based cleansers) and perform Ayurvedic oil massage to your whole body (abhyanga) in the morning before you shower.

Pitta Skin.

\* Description: Pitta dosha is composed of the elements of fire and water. If you have a pitta skin type your skin is fair, soft, warm and of medium thickness. When balanced, your skin has a beautiful, slightly rosy or golden glow, as if illuminated from within. Your hair typically is fine and straight, and is usually red, sandy or blonde in color. Your complexion tends toward the pink or reddish, and there is often a copious amount of freckles or moles.

\* Potential problems: Among the many beauty challenges of pitta skin types is your tendency to develop rashes, rosacea, acne, liver spots or pigment disorders. Because of the large proportion of the fire element in your constitution, your skin does not tolerate heat or sun very well. Of all the three skin types, pitta skin has the least tolerance for the sun, is photosensitive, and most likely to accumulate sun damage over the years. Pitta skin is aggravated by emotional stress, especially suppressed anger, frustration, or resentment.

\* Recommendations for care

Avoid excessive sunlight, tanning treatments and highly heating therapies like facial or whole body steams. Avoid hot, spicy foods and favor astringent, bitter and sweet foods which balance pitta. (Again, naturally sweet, not chocolate and refined sugar!) Sweet juicy fruits (especially melons and pears), cooked greens and rose petal preserves are especially good. Drinking plenty of water helps wash impurities from sensitive pitta skin. Reduce external or internal contact with synthetic chemicals, to which your skin is especially prone to react, even in a delayed fashion after years of seemingly uneventful use. Avoid skin products that are abrasive, heating or contain artificial colors or preservatives. Most commercial make-up brands should be avoided in favor of strictly 100% natural ingredient cosmetics. And be sure to get your emotional stress under control through plenty of outdoor exercise, yoga and meditation.

Kapha Skin.

\* Description: Kapha dosha is composed of the elements of earth and water. If you have a kapha skin type your skin is thick, oily, soft and cool to the touch. Your complexion is a glowing porcelain whitish color, like the moon, and hair characteristically thick, wavy, oily and dark. Kapha skin types, with their more generous collagen and connective tissue, are fortunate to develop wrinkles much later in life than

vata or pitta types.

\*Potential problems If your skin becomes imbalanced, it can show up as enlarged pores, excessively oily skin, moist types of eczema, blackheads, acne or pimples, and water retention. Kapha skin is also more prone to fungal infections.

\* Recommendations for care

Kapha skin is more prone to clogging and needs more cleansing than other skin types. Be careful to avoid greasy, clogging creams. Likewise, avoid heavy, hard to digest foods like fried foods, fatty meats, cheeses and rich desserts. Eat more light, easy to digest, astringent, bitter and pungent (well-spiced) foods as they balance kapha. Olive oil is the best cooking oil and a little ginger and lime juice can be taken before meals to increase your characteristically sluggish digestive fire. Take warm baths often and use gentle cleansers to open the skin pores. Avoid getting constipated and try to get some exercise every day to increase circulation and help purify the skin through the sweating process.

Inner Beauty: Gunam.

Happy, positive, loving, caring individuals have a special beauty that is far more than skin deep. Conversely we all experience the quick and deleterious effect on our skin from fatigue and stress.

Inner beauty is authentic beauty, not the kind that shows on a made-up face, but the kind that shines through from your soul, your consciousness or inner state of being. Inner beauty comes from a mind

and heart that are in harmony, not at odds with each other, causing emotional confusion, loss of confidence, stress and worry. Inner peace is the foundation of outer beauty.

Maintain your self-confidence and a warm, loving personality by paying attention to your lifestyle and daily routine and effective management of stress (I highly recommend the TM technique for its scientifically-verified benefits on mental and physical health and reduced aging.) You will also be healthier and feel better through the day if you eat your main meal at midday and make a habit of going to bed early (by 10 PM is ideal.)

Remember, kindness, friendliness and sincerity naturally attract people to you. On the other hand, being uptight or tense makes people want to walk the other way, regardless of your facial structure, body weight, or other outer signs we associate with attractiveness.

Lasting Beauty: Yayastyag

In order to slow the aging process and gain lasting beauty there are two additional key considerations beyond those already discussed,

1. Eliminate toxins and free radicals in the body: The main deteriorating effects of aging come as toxins and impurities (called ama in Ayurveda) accumulate throughout the body. These toxins may begin as free radicals in the body, or over time may become oxidized into free radicals, all of which contribute to

premature aging in the body. For lasting health and beauty it is essential to avoid and neutralize free radicals, to prevent impurities of all kinds from accumulating and to remove those that have already become lodged in the body.

The most powerful cleansing therapy in Maharishi Ayurveda is "panchakarma" therapy, a series of natural treatments ideally performed twice yearly, that involves 5–7 days in a row of massage, heat treatments and mild herbal enemas. Ayurveda emphasizes the importance of undergoing this cleansing program once or twice a year to prevent impurities from accumulating, localizing and hardening in the tissues. Just as we change the oil in our cars regularly for optimal performance and lifespan, Ayurveda recommends that we cleanse the "sludge" from our tissues on a regular basis through panchakarma treatments.

Best of all, panchakarma treatments are luxurious, blissful, and make you feel (and look) completely rejuvenated in just a few days time. I have had many a patient who told me that friends asked them afterwards if they had gotten a facelift, they looked so fresh and youthful!

Other free radical busters include: reducing mental stress, eating antioxidant foods like leafy green vegetables, sweet, juicy fruits and cooking on a daily basis with antioxidant, detoxifying spices like turmeric and coriander.

## 2. Add rejuvenative techniques to daily living:

The daily activities of life in the modern world systematically wear us down and speed up the aging process. Ayurveda maintains it is crucial to practice daily rejuvenative regimens to counteract the stressful wear and tear of everyday life. According to Ayurveda the most important rejuvenative routines for your life are: Going to bed by 10:00 PM. This simple habit is one of the most powerful techniques for health and longevity, according to MAV. Meditate daily. Any meditation that does not involve concentration (which has been shown to increase anxiety) can be very helpful. I highly

recommend the twice-daily deep rest and enlivenment of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) technique, whose benefits have been verified by over 700 published research studies. Eat organic, whole fresh food that is freshly prepared. There is an Ayurvedic saying: "Without proper diet, medicine is of no use. With proper diet, medicine is of no need." Be sure to avoid those leftovers, processed and microwaved foods for better nutrition and vitality. Perform Ayurvedic oil massage in the morning (abhyanga). Morning oil massage purifies the entire body, reduces anxiety and stress, helps prevent and heal injuries and supports circulation. It is especially helpful in creating a radiant complexion and keeping your skin youthful. Research shows it may also help prevent skin cancers. Practice yoga asanas. Maintaining flexibility and circulation is key to health. Practice pranayama (yoga breathing) techniques. Pranayama enlivens the mind and body. Ideally practice the following sequence twice a day. Asanas, pranayama and meditation.

## Summary

Everyone's unique beauty shines forth when they have radiant health and personal happiness. Beauty is a side effect of a balanced, fulfilled life. Supreme personal beauty is accessible to everyone who is

willing to take more control of their health in their day-to-day life through time-tested principles of natural living.

For most of us, beauty is not a gift but a choice. Every woman can be radiantly beautiful simply by beginning to lead a healthier life. You will be rewarded by the glowing effects you will see in your mirror each day and the powerful, bliss-producing effect your special beauty has on everyone in your life.

Nancy Lonsdorf M.D. received her M.D. from Johns Hopkins and did her postgraduate training at Stanford. She has studied Ayurveda with some of the world's most renowned Ayurvedic physicians in India, Europe and the U.S. Dr. Lonsdorf has 17 years of clinical experience with Ayurveda and is currently the Medical Director of The Raj Ayurveda Health Center in Vedic City Iowa.

Dr. Lonsdorf has authored two books on Ayurveda and women's health: *A Woman's Best Medicine* (Penguin/Putnam 1995 ; ISBN 0-87477-785-2) describing the Ayurvedic approach to the major issues in women's health *A Woman's Best Medicine for Menopause* (Contemporary/McGraw Hill 2002; ISBN 0-8092-9335-8) describing the Ayurvedic approach to menopause

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### **The right Beauty Supplies Will make you look Great!**

#### **By Mike Yeager**

Use beauty supplies the right way and yours could well be the face that launched a thousand ships! Growing old may be mandatory, but looking it certainly isn't. It's just that one has to do it right. But that's exactly what's difficult. The mind boggles with the onslaught of unending types of beauty supplies, countless makeup and enticing brands. Am I using the right beauty supplies? Am I doing it correctly? What about side effects? Thankfully, makeup tips are not very difficult to find.

Trust the beauty supply expert.

Generally, you can always trust a beauty supply expert. And thankfully, one is almost always available without much trouble. The media abounds with beauty supply tips. And then there are brands that you can trust your skin with. Or use exotic mineral beauty supplies that are a great alternative to chemical beauty supplies. They use natural ingredients and causes less damage to the skin. Over a period of time, the presence of wrinkled skin could make that vital difference between skin that used regular beauty supplies and skin that used natural beauty supplies.

Beauty supplies today not only means enhancing beauty that is skin-deep, it also means preservation of skin nutrition. After all, our skin is the largest organ of our body and needs adequate nutrition like any other organ. Consistent, healthy skin care is the best way to avoid wrinkles, sunspots and premature aging. It will pay off in the end. We spend our hard-earned cash on beauty and skincare. Lets make sure that its main beneficiary is our skin, not skin care product manufacturers.

Mike Yeager  
Publisher

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