

BEAUTY

What Your Skin Needs Most

Here's how to ID your skin type and put your best face forward.

BY KRISSY BRADY

Normal, dry, oily, sensitive—figuring out which one describes your skin will help you find the products that work best for your complexion. Simple, right? Not always!

Your skin type is primarily based on genetics, but age, hormones, weather, stress, and medications can also play a role, so your skin is likely to change over months and years. Plus, you may have more than one type, says Joshua Zeichner, M.D., an associate professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. Here's what to know.

NORMAL SKIN

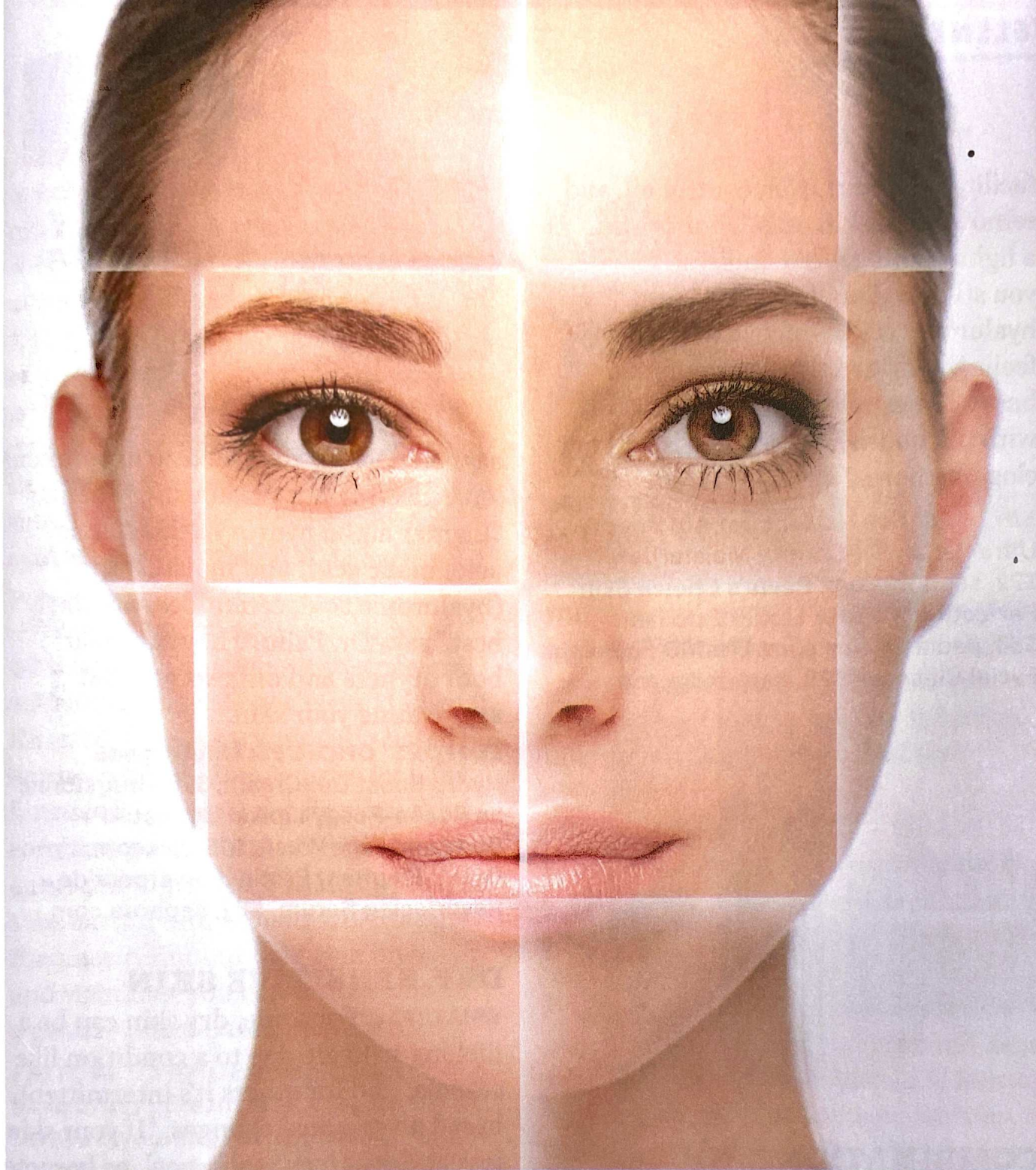
WHAT IT IS: Normal skin is überchill—it rarely exhibits signs of acne, redness, or any other form of irritation.

If you don't really know what people mean when they say their skin feels oily or dry, this is probably you. Also, “this is skin that's very tolerant of most, if not all, treatments and products,” says New York-based cosmetic dermatologist Michele Green, M.D.

HOW TO MANAGE IT: Because there's very little drama associated with normal skin, stick with the classics, says Melanie Palm, M.D., a dermatologist and an associate professor at the University of California, San Diego: Cleanse twice a day, use an anti-oxidant serum in the morning and a retinoid at night, moisturize, and apply broad-spectrum SPF 30 sunscreen.

EDITORS' CHOICES: RoC Retinol Correxion Line Smoothing Night Serum Capsules, \$33, ulta.com; Neutrogena Ultra Gentle Daily Cleanser, \$11, drugstores; The Ordinary Natural Moisturizing Factors + HA, \$6, sephora.com





OILY SKIN

WHAT IT IS: Oily skin produces higher-than-normal levels of oil, and this can occur in the T-zone or across the entire face. “Oily skin often looks shiny,” says Dr. Zeichner. “Your face may feel greasy or heavy, and your pores may be more prominent.” Blotting papers may play a recurring role in your skincare routine, and you may also be prone to breakouts.

HOW TO MANAGE IT: Oily skin does need balance, but it’s important to steer clear of harsh products, like alcohol-based toners, that can strip the skin and cause it to overcompensate, producing more oil. Start with a lightweight cleanser and follow up with a toner to help open pores. “Select a toner with alpha hydroxy, salicylic, or glycolic acid,” says Dr. Green. “These ingredients

facilitate cell turnover, control oil, and remove dead skin cells.” Finish with a lightweight gel-like moisturizer (yes, you still need one!) that contains hyaluronic acid, which keeps skin feeling hydrated without being too heavy. “These elements provide skin with the nourishment it needs without clogging pores,” says Dr. Green.

EDITORS' CHOICES: First Aid Beauty Ultra Repair Oil-Control Moisturizer, \$32, sephora.com; Paula's Choice Skin Perfecting 2% BHA Liquid Exfoliant, \$30, paulaschoice.com; EltaMD Foaming Facial Cleanser, \$28, dermstore.com



COMBINATION SKIN

WHAT IT IS: Combo skin is usually dry in some areas and oily or normal in others, often the T-zone, says Dr. Palm. Spots of your skin mere millimeters apart may behave drastically differently, so it can be tricky to keep your whole face happy.

HOW TO MANAGE IT: You may need extra products—but you don't have to use them all at once. “Alternating skincare cleansers is often required to maintain balance in the oily/dry areas,”



says Dr. Green. You can also experiment with meet-in-the-middle ingredients: “Lighter alpha hydroxy acids (lactic acid, malic acid) and moisturizers (hyaluronic acid, ceramides) are likely best,” says Dr. Palm. They can treat both dryness and oiliness without aggravating your skin.

EDITORS' CHOICES: Neutrogena Hydro Boost Gel-Cream, \$18, drugstores; La Roche-Posay Lipikar Syndet AP+ Body and Face Wash, \$15, cvs.com; Drunk Elephant Protini Powerpeptide Resurfacing Serum, \$82, sephora.com

DRY, SENSITIVE SKIN

WHAT IT IS: For some, dry skin can be a lifelong struggle due to a condition like eczema, and for others it's intermittent, based on seasonal changes. “If your skin is very dry, it may crack, peel, or become inflamed,” says Sonia Badreshia-Bansal, M.D., a dermatologist and founder of EliteMD in Danville, CA. People with dry skin also tend to skew sensitive, meaning that fragrances, preservatives, or even active ingredients like vitamin C or hydroxy acids can cause their skin to become red, blotchy, and irritated.

HOW TO MANAGE IT: Stick to hypoallergenic, fragrance-free products with minimal ingredients. Use hydrating

non-lathering cleansers (like cleansing oils and milks) to wash your face without compromising the integrity of the protective skin barrier, says Dr. Zeichner. Stay away from harsh exfoliating products or ingredients like glycolic acid and salicylic acid, which may be more irritating than beneficial. In a moisturizer, look for nourishing, soothing ingredients like hyaluronic acid, glycerin, ceramides, squalane, petrolatum, and niacinamide.

“A misconception is that those with dry skin can’t use anti-acne and anti-aging ingredients,” says Hadley King, M.D., a New York City-based dermatologist. “But you can look for formulations made for dry skin that combine gentle forms of active ingredients with ingredients that support the skin barrier and moisturize.” Rather than use retinol to fight fine lines and wrinkles, you can try bakuchiol, a gentler plant-based alternative.

EDITORS’ CHOICES: Vanicream Moisturizing Cream, \$14, drugstores; CeraVe Hydrating Facial Cleanser, \$15, drugstores; Olehenriksen Goodnight Glow Retin-Alt Sleeping Crème, \$55, sephora.com



MATURE SKIN

WHAT IT IS: You might see signs of aging as early as your 20s. “When we start noticing lines, wrinkles, brown spots, and enlarged pores, this is mature skin,” says Dr. Badreshia-Bansal. Hormonal changes and decreased skin cell turnover can lead to dryness and thinning, uneven tone and texture, and the appearance of wrinkles.

HOW TO MANAGE IT: Use a mild, gentle cleanser, and exfoliate regularly (at least twice per week, or as often as your skin will allow without becoming irritated) to improve cell turnover. Retinol can help regenerate lost collagen, improve texture, and even out skin pigmentation. “Stable vitamin C formulas can also improve collagen restructuring and brighten skin tone,” says Dr. Badreshia-Bansal. Moisturizers that are thicker and more emollient are usually best for mature skin, and the same is true for sunscreen, a must to protect the skin and slow down signs of aging.

EDITORS’ CHOICES: Olay Regenerist Retinol 24 Max Night Hydrating Moisturizer, \$33, drugstores; Avène Antirougeurs Redness-Relief Refreshing Cleansing Lotion, \$24, dermstore.com; SkinCeuticals C E Ferulic, \$166, dermstore.com