

SKIN CARE

for African-Americans

By: Marie Winchester

In this obsessed-with-looks society, there is an incredible premium placed on appearance. Embodying that premium is the quality and texture of one's skin. More than any other quality, skin tone represents a defining dynamic for African-American women. Its quality speaks volumes: Complexion can radiate vitality or betray age. It is a truth serum regarding a frame of mind or a quality of the diet.

Esthetician Irma Denson, president and founder of Irma Denson Skin Care Center and Day Spa in New York City, is an expert on African-American skin and its nuances and dynamics. This Paris, France-educated specialist has analyzed and prescribed solutions for various types of skins and skin conditions for 17 years.

According to Ms. Denson, most African-Americans' skin suffer from deep dehydration: The skin tends to be oily on the outside, but dry on the inside. In this condition, the natural moisture is trapped inside because of a lack of water and the use of too many oily products. At times the skin feels sensitive, has flaky patches, itching and the complexion is ashy.

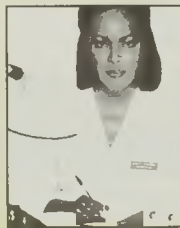
Another skin care choice revolves around the new technology of Alpha Hydroxy Acid products. The skin care industry has witnessed a quantum leap due to the discovery of the Alpha Hydroxy Acid family of products. This has opened up a whole new and dramatic world of skin care improvement options.

Of this family of Alpha Hydroxy Acids, Ms. Denson recommends that African-Americans select products containing (AHA) glycolic acid, a non-toxic natural substance that is derived from sugar cane and fruit acids.

"Products that contain glycolic acid are very good for dry and oily skin. Glycolic acid sloughs off the dead surface skin cells that impede moisturization and clogged pores, which is the major cause of break outs." Ms. Denson explains. She adds that glycolic acid is also very effective in treating different grades of acne and it helps smooth out the fine lines, giving the face a younger, fresher look.

Crucial to the improvement of skin is cleansing. "Cleansing is one of the most vital elements of total skin care," stresses Ms. Denson. "When meticulously and constantly performed, you get very good results. A deep cleansing assures the removal of impurities, any residue of make-up can rid the skin of excess oiliness. Most important, proper cleansing, which should be done twice daily, enhances the skin's ability to breathe."

For overall skin maintenance, she recommends that African-Americans use products made from vegetable and botanical extracts such as chamomile and sage, almond, aloe, azulene. These products are gentle, anti-inflammatory and have a soothing effect on the skin.



Irma Denson

Ms. Denson has treated a variety of skin problems and offers a program on how to treat each condition:

PROBLEM - Hyperpigmentation - caused by squeezing blemishes which results in dark spots, this condition is unique to Black skin. Other causes include sun damage, birth control pills, pregnancy and drugs.

SOLUTION - Consult a dermatologist for a prescription or consult an esthetician. Ms. Denson recommends for her clients an array of products with glycolic acid, hydroquinone or kojic acid. These product combos are very effective in lightening hyperpigmentation (discoloration). Repeated use will minimize skin discoloration and age spots and the overall appearance. With continued use, the skin will be softer, smoother and more uniform in color than ever before.

PROBLEM - Facial Hairs - Caused by shaving and plucking which results in ingrown hairs, razor bumps and dark spots.

SOLUTION - Ms. Denson advises those with this condition to have the hair waxed by an esthetician since this procedure tends to lift the hair from the follicles of the pores. She advises using a highly effective product by the name of Tend Skin, which was developed by Dr. Steven Rosen and is available for purchase from her center. This product should be used twice daily for several days, on legs, bikini lines, underarms and in other areas that are prone to hair growth and razor bumps. It is a product that both men and women can use.

PROBLEM - Acne

SOLUTION - Use products that contain benzoyl peroxide, a water-based formula. They help to reduce irritation and excessive dryness while penetrating the pores and releasing oxygen. Application of these products also attack the bacteria, which produces acne. Those allergic to benzoyl peroxide can substitute sulphur, which also has a very therapeutic effect on the skin. To address this condition, she suggests deep cleaning and exfoliation (removal of dead skin cells) depending upon the skin type. Merri Dee, a Chicago-based television personality whose ability to survive in this appearance-driven business,



evolved into a beauty consultant, by demand. Ms. Dee says her guests have sought her advice on how to keep their skin looking young and vibrant. To accommodate the hordes of requests, she has refined a skin care routine for Black women: 1) Clean the skin with a lubricating lotion to remove make-up 2) Cleanse face twice daily with a face sponge, this mini-cleansing/facial can rid the skin of deeply embedded oils and make-up 3) Follow with a light, non-alcoholic, non fragrant astringent. Those on a budget can use Witch Hazel, which contains non-irritating alcohol.

Nubia Skin Care Inc. is touted as "The Ultimate Black Skin Care Experience!" is All That Miracle Revitalizing formula from Nubia - this product contains the important glycolic acid that esthetician Irma Denson recommends. All That Miracle Revitalizing formula from Nubia Skin Care Inc. has been shown to produce excellent results on skin with fine lines, wrinkles, blemishes, discolorations, and dry, flaky conditions by accelerating the skin's natural ability to renew itself. It contains herbal extracts and humectants that "leave your skin feeling as soft and supple as skin that's years younger."

One of Nubia's newest skin care product offerings is the All That Oatmeal Buffing Creme, which promises to fluff away dead cells and keep the skin clean and fresh. A thoroughly natural modern version of the age-old facial mask, All That Oatmeal Buffing Creme helps draw out impurities while it soothes the skin. Mildly abrasive almonds purify the texture, and Allantoin helps heal the skin.

While there are a wide array of skin care products available, Ms. Dee says that the ultimate key to beauty revolves around a woman's self-perception. And, she says, women should not view aging as a sentence, but rather as a source of pride. "Wrinkles are a badge of honor," she declares. "Once a woman takes care of her skin and the skin wrinkles, as it will in time, she should focus inwardly feeling good about herself, still caring for herself, her skin and her looks."

Irma Denson can be reached at Irma Denson Skin Care Center and Day Spa 155 E. 55th Street, Suite 4D, New York, NY 10022, 212-371-3413; For Nubia Skin Care products call 800-77-NUBIA. ■



Merri Dee