

# NEWBEAUTY<sup>®</sup>

## SKIN HEALTH

### 17 Skin Care Mistakes Pros Say Almost Everyone Makes Are you guilty?

By Liz Ritter, Executive Editor · Updated: Mar 6, 2024



**B**ad habits are hardly ever unique to just you—and, according to these trusted experts, that especially applies to the ones that fall in the skin-care culprit category. Here's how to break them.

#### Featured Experts

- **Jody A. Levine, MD** is a dermatologist based in New York City
- Elizabeth Bahar Houshmand, MD is a dermatologist based in Dallas
- Renée Rouleau is a celebrity aesthetician
- Nerida Joy is a celebrity aesthetician
- Amber Johnson is an aesthetician and founder of the Facial Lounge

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### **Mistake #1: Using dirty hands**

It might sound like a solid “skin-care cringe,” but Dallas dermatologist Elizabeth Bahar Houshmand, MD says it’s rather common—both when applying the actual formula or scooping it out of a container. “Not washing your hands before dipping them into your jars is a no-no! I like to use a little skin-care spatula and wash my hands as the first step of my routine.”



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### **Mistake #2: Not washing your tools**

Along the same lines, New York dermatologist **Jody A. Levine, MD** considers not cleaning makeup brushes, applicators and tools correctly a bad practice. “The bacteria can lead to skin irritation, infection and breakouts.”



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### **Mistake #3: Not knowing your emollients**

Moisturizer may be basic, but the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) stresses that it also isn’t a one-size-fits-all product. Rather, moisturizer—which works by putting moisture into the skin, as well as preventing water from leaving the skin—can describe a number of different products, including lotions, gels, creams and ointments. And there are subtle differences among them: “A gel is often water-based and tends to feel lighter on the skin than a lotion. A cream is thicker and has higher oil content than a lotion and gel, making it more hydrating. An ointment is the thickest of all, making it the most effective in remedying dry skin. Emollients in these moisturizers keep your skin soft and smooth.”



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### **Mistake #4: Caring for your blemishes—the wrong way**

Call them zits, pimples, acne or blemishes. Bottom line: Most people will get them at certain periods in their life, and some will get them more severe than others. “Where most people go wrong is in how they treat the blemish once it appears,” celebrity aesthetician Renée Rouleau says. “Picking at it—or what I like to refer to as ‘performing minor surgery in the mirror’—applying spot treatments at the wrong phase of the breakout, and using the wrong breakout treatments on the wrong kinds of blemishes will all result in a blemish lasting longer and leaving a post-breakout red or dark scar than can linger for months.”



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### **Mistake #5: Getting too aggressive with actives**

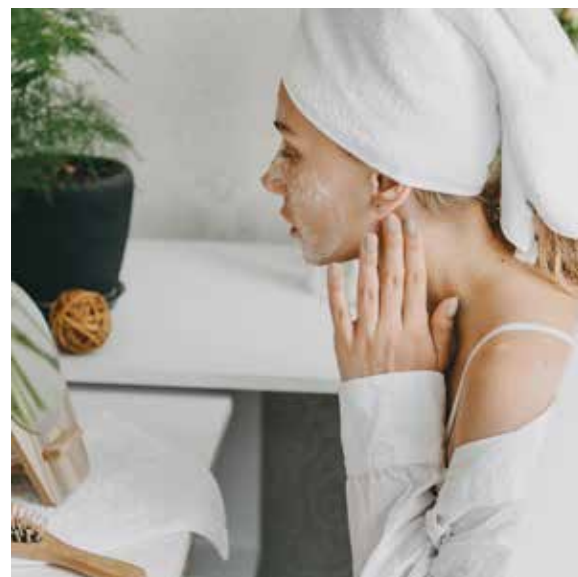
Celebrity aesthetician Nerida Joy tags this error as the “top two” mistakes clients come to her with. “Today, a consumer can purchase ‘active’ products such as a 70-percent glycolic with a pH of less than 2 percent, which is very dangerous and actually illegal. The ‘actives,’ like retinol and chemical exfoliants like AHAs, can really change the skin for the better, but, when overdone, it is a nightmare.”



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### **Mistake #6: Using too many exfoliating products too often**

Likewise, Rouleau says she has recently noticed the “if it’s not burning or stinging, it’s not working” trend. “In the quest to look younger and have smoother skin, people are doing too many aggressive exfoliating treatments that are actually injuring their skin. Too much exfoliation can cause a damaged moisture barrier, resulting in flaking, dehydration and inflammation, possible destruction of healthy cells, and a stimulation of melanin activity causing increased hyperpigmentation.”



### **Mistake #7: Disrupting the skin barrier**

Again, it's the "too-many-actives" move that Joy mainly blames for this one. "The problem is, when actives are overdone or too strong, they can chemically burn and dry out the skin, upsetting melanocytes and disrupting the skin barrier. A disrupted barrier leaves the skin vulnerable, irritated, blotchy and 'out-of-balance.' When the skin's barrier is out-of-balance anything can affect it—even the most gentle of ingredients," she says.



### **Mistake #8: Not going "back to basics" every once in a while**

Once the skin is burnt and out-of-balance, Joy recommends going back to the basics. "Start feeding and building the skin back," she says, adding that she likes using a gentle non-foaming cleanser, an aloe-healing gel and a hydrating non-active moisturizer. "After that, comes a physical sunblock high in zinc, titanium and iron oxides with a minimum of SPF 40. When the skin is balanced, the skin is nutrient-healthy—meaning it heals quickly, stays hydrated and is flexible to the touch. And this is when the magic can happen: Actives can now change the depth of a wrinkle, reduce a pore size, brighten and firm the skin."



### **Mistake #9: Not wearing sunscreen daily and not applying it generously enough**

You knew this one was coming. For starters, the number-one reason why your skin will get premature aging is from sunlight, daylight and UV rays—period—and Rouleau says 78 percent of those rays come from incidental exposure. "These are all the times when you don't think you're getting the damaging rays, like driving in the car, sitting in your home or office near windows or walking outside on a cloudy winter day when people don't feel like they need sun protection. If you want to prevent wrinkles, wearing sunscreen 365 days a year, rain or shine, inside or out, is a must. But in order for the SPF to truly protect your skin and prevent the harmful UV rays from damaging it, the formula has to be applied generously or it will not provide adequate protection. If you have a sunscreen that feels too heavy on your skin, you'll probably only apply a small amount and you're not doing your skin any good." Her advice: Find one you love and load it on every single day.



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### **Mistake #10: Either using alcohol-based toners or skipping this step in your routine entirely**

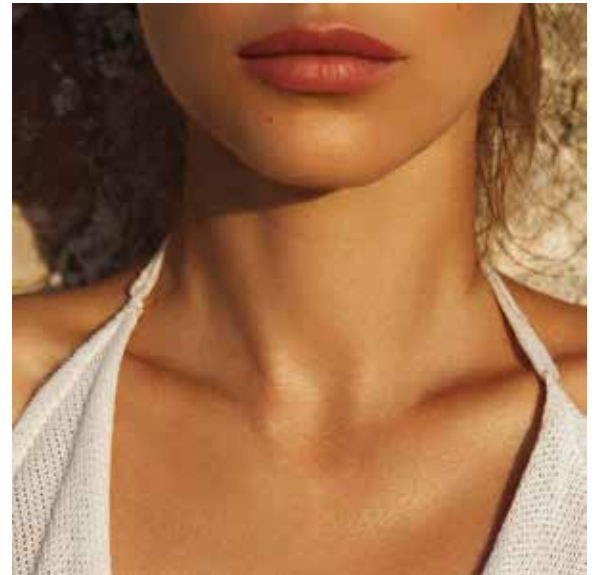
“Toners are an important step in a skin-care regimen and should be used daily,” Rouleau says, but adds that, using one loaded with alcohol will only dehydrate your skin and cause an increase in dull cell buildup. “If you’re not using one, it’s usually because you notice that it leaves your skin feeling dry, so you’ll skip it completely and miss out on important skin benefits. Alcohol-free toners should be used after every cleansing because they offer the following benefits: They give your skin a drink of moisture when left damp on the skin before applying moisturizer, they remove drying chlorines and minerals found in tap water, and because damp skin is 10 times more permeable than dry skin, when left damp, they can carry the active ingredients of your serum and moisturizer (applied after) deeper within your skin.”



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### **Mistake #11: Not taking care of your neck**

A big mistake: Treating your neck as an afterthought. “A woman will typically rub moisturizer onto her face and then whatever is left over on her fingertips will extend down onto her neck,” Rouleau says. Sound like you? “While the intention is good, it’s truly not helping that much in the quest for smooth, moist skin on the neck. This particularly applies with sunscreen, which is considered to be the best anti-aging product in the world. The little amount being applied as an afterthought is hardly enough to do its intended job because sunscreen needs to be applied generously in order to offer full sun protection.”



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### **Mistake #12: Using skin-care products incorrectly**

When instructions are given to you by an aesthetician or skin-care professional or written on the product itself, Rouleau says it’s very important to follow them. “Many issues created by skin-care products that seem to not work or cause non-favorable reactions, can be resolved by simply using the product correctly. For example, some people feel that when they are using products to reduce breakouts, it’s best to use them more often so that they will work better. However, in the case of acid serums, this is not a good practice. Acid serums, like those that contain glycolic, salicylic or lactic acid, are designed to reduce clogged pores and breakouts to promote clearer skin. They should not be overused because too much exfoliation can actually increase breakouts for some people due to irritation and inflammation. I cannot stress the importance of making sure that you thoroughly read the instructions on the back of skin-care products before using them on your skin. Cosmetic formulators create products with certain intentions and using them as directed will give you the best results.”



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### **Mistake #13: Not using the right skin routine to care for both wrinkles and breakouts**

This one is common for those who are 25–35 who still get clogged pores and breakouts, yet they are noticing fine lines and wrinkles. “Their home routine is either only addressing the breakouts with drying acne products, or they don’t have anything to prevent blemishes and they are using heavier anti-aging products,” Rouleau says. “I realize that this type of skin is probably the most challenging because what your skin really needs is the best of both worlds. Any acne product that leaves your skin feeling tight, dry and irritated is most definitely a no-no, as this creates dry skin cell buildup on the surface that traps oil and bacteria within the pores and can lead to more breakouts. Any anti-aging product that feels remotely greasy on your skin is not good either because acne-prone skin needs less oil because oil breeds bacteria and bacteria leads to breakouts. I would say the best strategy for managing all your skin’s needs is to use a gentle salicylic acid exfoliant under moisturizer three nights a week.”



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### **Mistake #14: Not wearing foundation**

“Some of my clients hide their wrinkles, blemishes, scarring and brown spots under makeup, and they come to me with the goal of perfecting their skin so they can go makeup-free,” Rouleau says. “Other clients don’t have much they want to cover up, so they think that wearing foundation makeup is not needed and that not wearing it is helping their skin by letting it ‘breathe.’ For starters, the skin doesn’t have a respiratory system, so thinking that the skin breathes is a total myth. I like to educate my clients to think of makeup as a skin-care product because during daylight hours it protects your skin from UV light and environmental damage. Most forms of liquid or powder foundations contain ingredients like titanium dioxide that act as a natural sun protectant. Even if your makeup doesn’t indicate it has SPF, it is definitely still guarding your skin from the sun’s rays.”



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### **Mistake #15: Not exfoliating often enough with the right type of exfoliant**

Most people have a facial scrub in their bathroom, but they only use it “when they remember.” Rouleau says, “Exfoliation is one of the best things you can do for your skin, so you’re missing out on some major skin improvement when you only use it once in a while. I like facial scrubs—using them three times a week is really beneficial—but I encourage my less-disciplined clients to instead use an exfoliating acid serum underneath their moisturizer three nights a week. An acid serum uses ingredients like glycolic, lactic and salicylic acids; when applied to the skin and left on overnight, they work deeply to dissolve the glue that holds dead cells together, revealing a brighter, smoother and clearer appearance in the morning. If you’re going to take the time for an extra step in your routine, you might as well make it one that’s really going to benefit your skin the most, and an acid serum is the BEST way to go.”



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### **Mistake #16: Ditching the double cleanse**

Amber Johnson, aesthetician and founder of the Facial Lounge, says she knows it's hard to cleanse skin at the end of the day, but she thinks cleansing your skin not just once, but two times, is absolutely necessary. "This allows you to clean your makeup off and any bacteria or pollutants. If you don't wash these off, it can lead to aging and breakouts and we know you don't want either."



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### **Mistake #17: Picking**

You most likely know this is a big double NO, but Johnson has an easy, good-for-your-complexion replacement if you're feeling the urge. "It can be so satisfying to pick away at those pimples or breakouts—but what isn't satisfying is that irritated, swollen red spot that appears or that scar. Instead, I suggest icing! Icing reduces swelling and redness, making the pimple or breakout much less noticeable! It also is much more relaxing and less painful than the picking process, and a bonus would be cryoglobes. These are glass globes filled with a magical potion that doesn't freeze and stays cold or longer just put them in the freezer and massage your skin after washing."

