

Lockdown Skincare Survival - Dermatologist insight into biggest lockdown skin complaints

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With many of us taking skincare and beauty into our own hands throughout the pandemic, the leading team of Consultant Dermatologists at the Cadogan Clinic (<http://www.cadoganclinic.com>) share their helpful advice to help navigate skin concerns through the home straight of lockdown (hopefully)...

From moles and maskne through to SPF and stress, collectively the doctors cover some of the biggest patient concerns being seen in “virtual” clinic right now.

Don't delay mole checks:

Dr Susan Mayou, Consultant Dermatologist at the Cadogan Clinic urges anyone noticing changes in their moles to have them checked immediately. There has been a 25% rise in skin cancer patients at the Cadogan Clinic due to patients not accessing mole check services throughout the pandemic. Appointments can be made with the GP, who will be able to refer on if required. “This is a health check that should not be delayed until after lockdown; a thin melanoma of less than 0.75mm picked up early has a 95% cure rate but this recovery rate reduces if the melanoma is thicker – time is of the essence,” warns Dr Mayou.

Consultant Dermatologist Dr Anjali Mahto also stresses the importance of having a qualified medical expert examine and, if necessary, perform the mole removal. “This is a procedure that should never be undertaken by a beautician or unqualified practitioner. If it is a melanoma and isn't correctly removed, this could result in the potential spread of skin cancer,” says Dr Mahto.

Strip back DIY beauty:

Lockdown has provided ample time for extensive research and many people have developed a newfound interest in skincare. Having forgone facials, peels and aesthetic skin treatments for a long period of time, people are taking beauty matters into their own hands. Dr Mahto warns against using too many different products with active ingredients which can inadvertently cause damage to the skin barrier from DIY home treatments. She also cautions about where the advice is taken from, “Ensure any skincare advice you are receiving is from a qualified professional, rather than an influencer who lacks the evidence-based knowledge.”

Dr Mahto also recommends looking for multipurpose products, which perform more than one role rather than overloading the skin with multiple products. “Using a single product rather than multiple products to achieve the same end point reduces waste and also decreases the risk of irritation and sensitivity to the skin,” she advises.

Manage stress levels:

Mental health is at an all-time low for many people and stress is exacerbating inflammatory skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis and acne. Many patients are reluctant to consult with a doctor throughout this time but doctors are still seeing patients with many are offering phone or video consultations. It's important to not only maintain the treatment regime but also make an appointment with your doctor with any worrying skin concerns.

The implications of stress can also be seen in other conditions such as hair loss. Consultant

Dermatologist Dr Kristina Semkova has seen an increase in patients who are experiencing patchy hair loss or the shedding of hair, which can be caused by stress and hormone changes as well as a deficiency in iron as diets have change throughout the various lockdowns (comfort eating and increased alcohol consumption can be held accountable for flares in many cases!). Dr Mahto has also seen the effects of iron deficiency as a result of people embracing a plant-based diet, which can be particularly problematic in women and exacerbate skin conditions. She strongly urges adequate supplementation if dietary changes are being made.

Maintain mask hygiene to help manage maskne:

Dr Mayou is increasingly seeing more patients presenting with maskne and advises using disposable, paper masks or washing reusable masks in the washing machine after each use. She recommends thoroughly cleansing the skin in the morning and evening and choosing a lightweight, noncomedogenic moisturiser to prevent clogging of the pores. If spots persist, a topical treatment prescribed by a dermatologist or GP may be necessary.

Dr Semkova also advises not to pick spots, "We are all having much more mirror time, which we are using to scrutinise the skin. Picking spots can easily lead to infection, lengthen the healing time and cause scarring."

Use daily SPF:

Even though time outside is restricted Dr Mayou urges people to continue wearing sunscreen: especially on bright sunny, albeit cold winter days. UVA rays are responsible for premature skin ageing, including the formation of wrinkles. They are present all year round and can even penetrate through glass. Wearing SPF on a daily basis is the cheapest and most effective, scientifically proven anti-ageing product available.

Check used by dates for makeup and skincare:

Most of us have reduced or ceased wearing makeup for the last 10 months. It's a good idea to check the used by dates of makeup to ensure products haven't expired by the time we resume the regular makeup routine. It's also a good time to throw away old mascaras and either clean or replace makeup brushes, which can be a breeding ground for bacteria.

Additionally, Dr Semkova warns about the possible consequences of having a skin care break, "If you have taken a break from using skincare actives, your skin may have lost its tolerance and be more sensitive when you start again. If a reaction does occur when you begin using anti-ageing products again, you should stop using the product, let your skin settle and reintroduce gradually to build up your tolerance and also use hypoallergenic makeup until then. It's also advisable to check the used by dates of skincare products to ensure they haven't expired throughout this time." she recommends.

Add moisture to keep skin nourished:

Skin tends to be drier in the winter and with everybody spending most of their time indoors in the central heating, our skin is dryer than ever before. People who have never had dry skin conditions are suddenly experiencing them. Dr Mayou suggests using a moisturising shower product such as Bioderma Atoderma followed by a hydrating body lotion to keep the skin nourished.

Don't WFH in sweaty gym kit:

From working out at home to working from home, many of us are skipping the shower step and heading straight to the desk, saving time and the laundry pile. But Dr Semkova urges fitness enthusiasts not to skip the shower as sweaty, warm skin creates an ideal environment for bacteria and fungi to thrive, increasing the risk of clogged pores and skin infections such as body acne and folliculitis.

Patients need to have patience:

Finally, Dr Mahto stresses that patience is required when treating any skin concern. "Unfortunately, skin conditions can rarely be fixed in just one consultation and instant cures don't just happen. Be prepared for a long-standing relationship with your dermatologist; patience and perseverance are key to any treatment protocol."

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