

**Kara Watkins**

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## **HEALTHY SKIN**

Another summer is drawing to a close, and if those lazy days spent frolicking in the Santa Barbara sunshine have left your skin begging for some serious pampering, you're not alone. Who doesn't relish a relaxing, rejuvenating day of facials and mani-pedis? Yet I can't help but wonder if I'm doing all I can to keep my skin healthy in between those spa visits. Could I be doing more to protect my skin and fend off those inevitable signs of aging, or worse, skin cancer? And what skincare treatment options do we have here in Santa Barbara? To satisfy my curiosity, I set out to talk with a diverse group of local professionals representing a full spectrum of skincare—a dermatologist, a plastic surgeon, a pair of naturopathic doctors, an esthetician—and a dietician for good measure. And the results are in: healthy, beautiful skin is within our reach, and it doesn't have to hurt or break our budgets.

### **Dermatologist**

"We don't live in Santa Barbara to sit outdoors, but we don't want our skin to be casualty of our lifestyle, either," cautions dermatologist **Louise Stewart, M.D.** Seeing on average one melanoma case per month in her Santa Barbara office, Dr. Stewart's first priority is keeping her patients healthy and free of skin cancer. "Before I do anything to make the skin look better, I make sure there are no serious problems," she says. "I perform full body cancer screenings, give advice on how to identify melanomas, and talk about skincare and keeping healthy in a sunny climate."

To help prevent sun damage and reduce the chance of developing skin cancer—even darker complexions are at risk—she recommends avoiding midday sun and wearing sun-protective clothing. Even though most sun damage occurs before we turn 20, “It’s never too late to start wearing sunscreen,” she says. Those with light to medium complexions should use a light moisturizer with sunscreen—ideally SPF 30 with broad-spectrum UVA/UVB filters like Parsol® 1789, titanium, or zinc. This level of protection is also important for women being treated for melasma, age spots, or other hyperpigmentation. Neutrogena, Banana Boat, and Oil of Olay have recently introduced affordably priced broad-spectrum products designed for daily wear.

Rules of Thumb: Become skin-cancer aware and take sun protection seriously, even on cloudy days. Use a gentle cleanser (try Cetaphil or Purpose), exfoliate with glycolic acid or Retin A (good for both acne-prone and aging skin), and use a moisturizer if needed. Apply products from lightest to heaviest, with sunscreen last.

## **Plastic Surgeon**

Young, successful, and down-to-earth, plastic surgeon **Douglas J. Mackenzie, M.D.**, sees his patients with an artist’s eye. “The human face, the human body, is the most exquisite medium for an artist,” he says. “A doctor can help people sustain their health and he or she can also help them achieve the most positive image of themselves.” And that doesn’t always include a scalpel. Never one to push his patients towards surgery, Dr. Mackenzie’s palette contains plenty of non-surgical options. Take for instance the innovative Titan™ skin tightening procedure. Using infrared light to stimulate collagen production, it plumps and tightens the skin, and works equally well on the face and

body. For some patients, Titan™ replaces the need for invasive cosmetic surgery, at about 1/2 the price. Other non-invasive treatments include intensive facial peels, lasers and intense pulse light (IPL) to improve sun-damaged skin, fine lines and wrinkles, spider and varicose veins, rosacea, acne, and pigmentation.

Describing his approach to skincare as “broad and holistic,” Dr. Mackenzie encourages patients to be open to a combination of therapies. “Be diligent, and be patient,” he says. “Results take time.”

Rules of Thumb: Eat right, take omega-3 and antioxidant supplements, and wear SPF 30 sunscreen. Avoid smoking, a habit that guarantees skin will age prematurely.

### **Naturopathic Physicians**

**Dr. Trevor Holly Cates** and her husband, **Dr. Thaddeus Jacobs**, both licensed doctors of naturopathic medicine, share a bustling medical practice—the Santa Barbara Center for Natural Medicine—housed in a charming Victorian in the heart of Santa Barbara.

Relying on nutrition, homeopathic remedies, and nontraditional therapies such as mesotherapy and acupuncture, they work to “enhance the body’s ability to heal itself.”

Thus, it’s no surprise they would approach skincare from the inside out. “Poor diet, stress, lack of exercise and rest affect skin health,” says Dr. Cates. “Fix these problems, and skin will naturally improve,” Dr. Jacobs jumps in, adding, “You don’t want to put a band-aid on top of a broken system. We find the underlying causes of skin problems and address those before turning to topical remedies.”

Rules of Thumb: Exercise to help sweat out toxins, follow a healthy diet with lots of fresh fruits and veggies. To stimulate the body's production of vitamin D (essential for overall health), spend about 10-15 minutes sunscreen-free in the sun each day, in the early morning or late afternoon. Seek shade and protect skin during the peak hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.) with sunblocks containing titanium or zinc, and/or hats and clothing; soothe and moisturize sun-worn skin with calendula, comfrey, and pure aloe.

### **Esthetician**

We expect to be pampered when we visit a day spa, but Complexions Urban Retreat offers its clients something more: an education. Owner and skin-care educator **Colleen Elizabeth**, a petite, soft-spoken brunette, is unapologetically passionate about skincare. She discusses clients' skincare routines to identify bad habits and inspects their makeup bags to spot products that may be doing more harm than good. "Spa treatments alone are not enough to maintain healthy skin, she asserts. "We try to give educated skincare at an affordable price . . . and with a little bit of education, my clients are able to maintain their skin at home."

Purity is essential to Colleen's skincare philosophy. "I'm a nerd for ingredients; it's important to look at what cosmetics have in them," she explains. Don't be fooled by the high prices and glamorous ad campaigns of the famous cosmetics firms, who often spend more money on advertising and packaging than on quality ingredients.

To help revive summer-worn skin, Colleen recommends an exfoliating facial or a chemical peel to accelerate cell regeneration and eliminate the free radical damage caused by the sun. Drink plenty of water to hydrate the skin and flush out toxins.

Rules of Thumb: Keep it simple. Make your products work for you—choose multipurpose skincare products such as moisturizers with an effective sunscreen (titanium and zinc are good) for daytime, and an exfoliating face cream (containing glycolic acid) at night. Instead of liquid foundation, use a crushed mineral makeup, which offers a natural, physical sun block and even helps clear up problem skin.

### **Dietician**

My conversation with **Gerri French, M.S., R.D., C.D.E.**, a registered dietician at Sansum Medical Clinic, confirmed the relationship between diet and skin health. So from a nutritionist's point of view, what is the key ingredient for optimal skin health? Water. "Hydration is the foundation of good skin," answers Gerri. "Drink plenty of water and limit your intake of caffeine and alcohol." Finding ways to reduce stress also helps our skin maintain its glow. One way to do this, Gerri suggests, is to stop worrying if we eat "bad" foods once in awhile. Instead, concentrate on eating healthy most of the time. Choose fresh colorful foods, foods in their whole/natural states, and foods rich in omega-3 (salmon, sardines, flaxseed and oil, walnuts). Add to this plan a daily supplement of evening primrose, and skin should look and feel better in three months.

Rules of Thumb: Don't worry; be happy. Eat fresh, colorful, whole foods, skip the cocktails and double capps, and don't forget the water.

Our skin deserves to be taken care of and look its best all year round, and it can if we follow a few easy steps and seek professional treatments when needed. Lucky for us, Santa Barbara offers an abundant variety of skincare experts ready to pamper, rejuvenate, and partner with us in our journey toward healthy skin.

**SIDEBAR: Contact Info . . .**

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