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The World's Best Stay-Gorgeous Secrets

We traveled the globe to find the ultimate youth-boosting moves. You won't believe these simple strategies.

By Jennifer Goldstein

EVER NOTICE HOW SO MANY WOMEN FROM OTHER COUNTRIES SEEM TO get older without looking "old"? Famous beauties like Iman, Juliette Binoche, Isabella Rossellini, and Salma Hayek jump to mind, but the phenomenon isn't limited to celebs. What secret weapons do women around the globe have that we could add to our anti-aging arsenal? After speaking to international beauty experts, a few common strategies emerged. Read on for the world's best age-proofing moves.

Hydrate (and wash!) with oil

In the States, where products are often marketed as "oil-free," some women think of oil as a negative thing. But women in Asia, South America, and the Middle East often use plant-based essential oils in place of moisturizers. "In India, anointing the skin with the right type of oil is a nourishing way to keep your complexion young," says Pratima Raichur, an Ayurvedic physician, chemist, and botanist. For example, smoothing on geranium oil—found in **Clarins Lotus Face Treatment Oil** (\$48; clarins.com)—can help to reduce the appearance of fine lines.

In Asia, many women also use oils like **DHC Deep Cleansing Oil** (\$25; dhccare.com) in lieu of face wash. Some Mediterranean women rely on straight olive oil to cleanse at the end

Photo: Levi Brown, Prop styling: Brett Kurzwel

of the day. And the trend extends to Middle Eastern women, too: "In Iran, my mother used to cleanse her skin every night with rose water mixed with pomegranate oil," recalls Margo Marrone, a marketing manager for Organic Pharmacy.

There's a good reason oils keep skin fresh. "Soaps and foaming cleansers with sulfates can alter the natural pH of the skin, which eventually will cause dryness and create lines and wrinkles," Raichur explains. "But oils can remove dirt and makeup without stripping the skin."

Slow down your skin care

In Europe and Asia, women not only tend to have multistep skin-care rituals but actually enjoy taking the time to do them, notes Kazumi Toyama, global scientific communications manager for the skin-care company SK-II. In Russia, for example, a skin regimen can involve "removing makeup, then cleansing and using toner, a serum or two, moisturizer, and other treatments," says Lexandra Berchik, an aesthetician and educator for Bliss Spas. And Korean women may take even longer to treat their skin by massaging on multiple products each evening, says Susan Kim, director of marketing for Korean skin-care brand Sulwha soo.

But do more products—and more time spent applying them—really produce better anti-aging results? It's possible. Slowing down to remove your makeup, then taking a few minutes to smooth on your cleanser and gently wipe it off with a warm, damp cloth can help you relax at the end of the day—a good thing, since at least one study, from researchers at the University of California, San Francisco, has shown that women who are more stressed have skin that ages faster.

Facial massage is also a key part of these multipart skin-care rituals, and many women around the globe swear it helps them look younger. (If you want to give it a try, click the "Video"

link on sca.shiseido.com for a demo.) At the very least, massaging on your moisturizers and treatments will make your products more effective, experts say. "Rubbing in moisturizer for a few extra minutes can increase blood flow, warming your skin so products penetrate better and thus are more effective," says Marianna Blyumin-Karasik, MD, a cosmetic dermatologist at the Baumann Cosmetic Research Institute in Miami.

Use natural anti-agers

Whether it's a botanical extract from an indigenous plant or a certified-organic skin serum, women the world over know that Mother Nature can rival even the priciest dermatologist.

"The green movement is picking up speed in the United States, but women in Europe have long known they can get great results with products that use clean, botanically based ingredients instead of synthetics," Nicky Kinnaird, the British founder of Space NK apothecary beauty stores. "I never used [traditional] eye creams because they always irritated my eyes and made them puffy. But once I tried the one from Zelens I was hooked," she says of **Zelens Intensive Triple Action Eye Cream** (\$160; spacenk.com), which was developed in England and features powerful natural antioxidants like *Centella asiatica* herb.

Going green doesn't always have to be pricey, either. In South America



America's Top Tips

Sure, there are plenty of beauty tricks to steal from women around the world, but experts agree there are a few moves they could learn from us.

STAY OUT OF THE SUN. "Many women in Russia and Europe still believe tanned skin is healthier," Dr. Blyumin-Karasik says. But Americans are more vigilant about sun protection and, as a result, have fewer age spots than those far-flung tanners.

DON'T SMOKE. Anyone who has sat in a smoky café abroad knows the air quality is better at home—and that's a good thing. Dermatologists say exposure to cigarette smoke can accelerate skin aging.

EMBRACE HAIR COLOR. Dyeing your hair—as more than 65 percent of American women do, according to a Procter & Gamble study—takes years off your looks. "Full, shiny, richly-colored hair is a trademark of youth," Dr. Blyumin-Karasik explains.

Photo: Levi Brown, Prop styling: Brett Kurzweil



and Southeast Asia, women often make their own skin treatments with natural ingredients. “My mother and grandmother, who are from India, used to make a scrub using ingredients like chickpea flour,” says Shobha Tummala, the founder and CEO of Shobha salons in New York City. And Miriam Raphaely, the CEO of Dr. Hauschka, says indigenous ingredients like fruit extract from the baobab tree are popular in South Africa, where she grew up. If you don’t happen to have a baobab tree in your backyard, try **Kiehl’s Facial Fuel Age Combat** (\$28; kiehls.com), which features the ingredient.

Take years off at the spa

Don’t get jealous, but in some parts of the world, a visit to the spa is as common as a manicure. “The average Russian woman goes for a facial about once a month,” Berchik says. And in many countries, spas are more about maintenance and education than indulgence. “In France, once you hit your teens, your mother usually takes you to the facialist to teach you how to care for your skin,” Kinnaird explains.

And some of the standard steps in a spa facial, like steaming, remain popular the world over. In Morocco, “both traditional and more modern women go every week to hammams [public bathhouses] that have a sauna or steam room,” explains Myriam Bohi, who works for the skin-care company Pierre Fabre Dermo-Cosmetique USA.

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While there’s no proof that a facial can turn back the clock, steaming does have its benefits. “Heat opens your pores so the ingredients in skin-care products are more effective,” Dr. Blyumin-Karasik explains. And if you don’t have time to hit the spa, it’s easy to steam at home before you apply skin-care products: Just fill your sink with hot water, lean over, and cover your head with a towel; five minutes should do the trick. (If the water cools, just turn on the tap to add more hot water.)

Eat great, look great

Do you believe that when you eat well it shows on your skin? If so, you’ve got a worldly point of view. “Greek women believe they have better-looking skin than women from other countries, and I credit their Mediterranean diet,” says Macrene Alexiades-Armenakas, MD, PhD, a New York City–based dermatologist. Research supports this idea; women whose diets are high in antioxidants and omega-3 fatty acids—common nutrients found in Greek-diet staples like olive oil, colorful vegetables, and fish—have fewer signs of damage after sun exposure, according to a recent study.

In Korea, “many women think if the body is healthy, the skin will naturally look younger as well,” says Kim, who notes that herbal teas are popular (she drinks five cups of antioxidant-rich green tea a day).

Valerie Orsoni, founder of Le BootCamp—and another fan of green tea—suspects French women may look younger because of their diets. “We don’t consume as many sugary foods,” she says. “I stick to things like whole grains and vegetables that are low on the glycemic index.” She could be on to something: One study in

Australia has linked a low-glycemic diet featuring a variety of produce, legumes, and fish to fewer wrinkles.

That just goes to show you don’t need to travel to international spas to age-proof your skin. Small changes to your diet and skin-care routine can make a big difference in how well you age. Take it from Russian women: “We believe you don’t have to be beautiful from birth,” Berchik says, “but you *are* beautiful if you take care of yourself.” ☺

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