

# Skinning the surface

**REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS** Common sense and education are key when it comes to skin-care products

MEGAN MARTIN SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE

**T**rying to choose the right products for your skin is a challenge faced by many people, most often, women.

In fact, women can end up spending countless hours and a small fortune on products hoping to improve the look of their skin. But according to some skin-care professionals, it doesn't have to be that way – if you do your homework.

"I always tell my clients that less is more," said Dr. Ari Demirjian, dermatologist at the Private Dermatology Clinic of Montreal, located in Town of Mount Royal. "Use sunscreen in the spring, summer and fall, and don't go buy a whole line of cosmetics, keep it simple."

Knowing your skin type is the first step to choosing products that are appropriate, without having to try dozens of different ones.

"You have to choose products accordingly, especially if you have an extreme skin type, such as oily and acne prone, or severely dry skin with eczema," Demirjian said. "People with normal skin usually have a wider range of products that their skin can tolerate and, therefore, just have to pay attention to the look and feel of their skin to know what works best for them."

You can be your own best advocate in determining your skin type, said Lorie Docker, skin care expert and owner of Medispa Jouvence on Sherbrooke St.

"When I have clients come in for a skin assessment, the first thing I ask is what they want to improve about their skin," Docker said. "People say things like, 'Oh I'm too oily, the size of my pores is huge,' or, 'My skin is so tight,' and they don't realize that they're actually telling me about their skin type when they do that."

Docker said paying attention to your skin, and getting a skin assessment at a spa or dermatologist's office is the best way to determine your skin type.

"Once you have that information, you can easily go to the pharmacy and look for products that are designed for your skin," she said. "But there is an overwhelming amount of information and products out there and in addition to knowing skin type, people need to know what to do, and not to do, to treat their skin properly."

Educating yourself is the most efficient way to go about skin care, and can save consumers a lot of headaches, she added.

"There are so many myths out there, like that the more expensive a cream or product is, the better it is," Docker said. "The biggest cost of a retail product is the advertising and packaging, the actual ingredients may not be worth that much."

Advertising for retail products can be very misleading, she continued, as retail products have the

least amount of active ingredients of the three types of skin care products – retail, professional and medical grade.

"If you want to treat something on your skin, like acne, age spots or lines, you cannot do it without high levels of active ingredient," Docker said. "The amount of active ingredi-

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LORIE DOCKER

ent in retail products is heavily monitored so that not just anyone can go into the store and use them at will."

Having those regulations in place is a good thing, but it's also misleading for consumers who purchase these products for purposes they can't fulfil, she said.

"If you're just trying to maintain skin that is already clear and beautiful, then you can get by using retail products, of course," Docker said. "But if you want to physically change something on the skin the effect with retail products will never be the same as with professional or medical grade ingredients."

Demirjian points out that people often have unrealistic expectations of their products.

"Moisturizers are the prime example of this," he said. "They don't rejuvenate skin and they don't make lines disappear, all they do is moisturize so if you're using them for anything else, stop, it's a waste."

Same goes for cleansers. "They're just that – cleansers. Don't expect them to remove black heads or white heads," Demirjian



PHOTOS: JOHN KENNEY THE GAZETTE

Esthetician and spa owner Lorie Docker, who has her own line of skin-care products, says treating a specific problem such as acne requires a high level of active ingredient in the treatment.

said. "There is really no miracle cleanser out there."

In addition to choosing the right daily skin care products, Demirjian said people can dramatically reduce or delay their need for rejuvenating products by following proper sun care.

"Photo-aging is the major cause of premature aging in the skin and it's all due to excessive sun exposure," he said.

"You walk outside, you work in the garden or do sports and you're receiving a good amount of sun; but if you protect yourself you can likely save a lot of lost time and money."

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