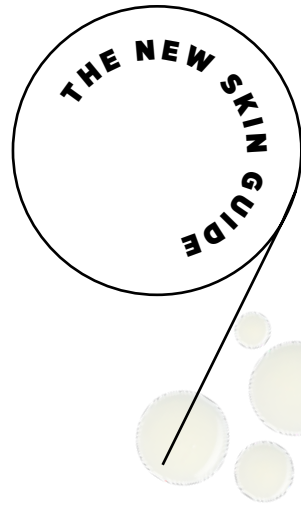




STEALTH BEAUTY

Fewer ingredients, less fussy routines and the promise of softer, brighter, better skin. 'Skinimalism' is ushering in a new culture of skincare and it may be time to dive in



Shhhh... skincare's gone quiet. 2021 is less about what's 'buzzy' or 'shouty' and more about what's tried and true. Gone are K-beauty's famed 10-step routines, which make for great theatre but no longer seem quite so suited to the cause. Now experts are advocating the complete opposite. 'Skinimalism', the equivalent of 'Marie Kondo-ing' your skincare routine, is an entirely more minimalist approach. One which pares back routines to the bare essentials and avoids endless layers of product. It's about doing things better, and with less, to make skin behave more efficiently.

SKIN DEEP

When it comes to skincare, it's possible to have too much of a good thing. "More does not equal better," warns consultant dermatologist Dr. Anjali Mahto. "I have patients who arrive at their initial consultation armed with 5-8 different products they use all at once, morning and night. With so many different variables, they can't tell which product is the problem and those that are actually working for them."

From AHAs to antioxidants, retinol and that second cleanse, our skin is groaning at the seams. We're over-cleansing, over-exfoliating and, explains celebrity aesthetician Dr. Barbara Sturm, over-moisturising. "If your skin is

constantly laden with heavy creams, it sends a signal to its water reservoirs to halt production of water, lipids and proteins. It produces less hydration and nutrients on its own," she says. Then it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: skin becomes lazy so we reach for even creamier formulas and the spiral is complete.

We're also overdoing it on actives, which presents as breakouts, tight, dry skin and redness. Glycolic acid may give skin the slick sheen of a wet seal, but too much stresses the protective barrier, which keeps moisture in and pollutants out. Vitamin C serums can be hit and miss, too, notes Dr. Sturm: "High concentrations at 15-20 per cent can reduce the effects of vitamin C and irritate skin." Barbara Sturm's The Good C Vitamin C Serum uses three skin-friendly forms – including Kakadu plum, the world's most potent plant source of vitamin C – at the optimal concentration of 5 per cent to brighten pigmentation and protect against free radicals.

ORDER OF THE DAY

Using skincare smarter – not harder – is the best approach. While 'skinimalism' is the biggest trend in beauty right now, dermatologists have been preaching this dialled-down method for years. Many, like

Dr. Emma Wedgeworth, Clinique's professional dermatologist, believe three steps – "cleanser, moisturiser and SPF" – are the backbone of a healthy regime. This can be subtly tweaked at night or to suit your skin type.

It's also a case of being more scrupulous about the products you choose. Cleanser is the lynchpin of any regime and Elemis' Pro-Collagen Naked Cleansing Balm contains all the butteriness of the original, just without the added frills of a fancy fragrance. Victoria Beckham Beauty is the skincare equivalent of a hardworking capsule wardrobe with its Cell Rejuvenating Power Serum and Rejuvenating Priming Moisturizer.

Tellingly, Net-A-Porter's current best-seller, Augustinus Bader The Cream, asks that you remain devoted to it for 27 days, using nothing else (apart from cleanser). The patented TFC8 complex in the cream, which acts like a 'skin GPS', then steers vitamins and amino acids to where they are needed and regenerates skin cells.

And skin that's easily riled should lean on products with ten, or less, ingredients. Chanel's La Solution 10 De Chanel Sensitive Skin Cream remains the blueprint for a minimalist moisturiser, its silver needle tea helping to calm redness.

SKINCARE SOS

Rather than multiple potent ingredients jostling for space in your bottles, Emma Wedgeworth recommends "incorporating one or two actives into your regime to tackle your main concerns." Serums with a high concentration of one main ingredient will tune up your complexion and also troubleshoot problem areas. To get the hydration boost your skin needs, look to a product with naturally occurring urea, glycerin or hyaluronic acid. Wishful Thirst Trap Juice HA3 & Peptide Serum contains three different forms of hyaluronic acid for bouncier skin.

The way you apply vitamin A is important, too. "Retinol can be an unstable molecule and doesn't always mix well with other actives, so the formulation is key," says Emma, who namechecks Clinique's Smart Night Clinical MD Multi-Dimensional Repair Treatment With Retinol. The cream's backing singers are hydrating hyaluronic acid, vitamin E and squalene to counteract the flaking that retinol is known to cause.

"Another way of cutting back on multiple steps is with multi-purpose products – those that incorporate actives formulated to work together safely," says Dr. Mahto. She swears by the Alpha-H Liquid Gold Midnight Reboot Serum, a two-in-one retinol and AHA exfoliant. Rihanna's Fenty Skin line takes a similar tack with three multi-tasking products including the Fat Water Pore-Refining Toner Serum, a hybrid product that targets stretched pores while also helping to fade dark spots.

So if you've never met an anti-ageing ingredient you didn't like, think on. The future of streamlined skincare has landed and with it, a bare-faced glow unsullied by product overload. ■

"IF YOUR SKIN IS
CONSTANTLY
LADEN WITH HEAVY
CREAMS, IT SENDS
A SIGNAL TO ITS
WATER RESERVOIRS
TO HALT
PRODUCTION OF
WATER, LIPIDS AND
PROTEINS. IT
PRODUCES LESS
HYDRATION AND
NUTRIENTS ON
ITS OWN"



Smart Clinical MD Age Transformer Resculpt, Dhs395 for 50ml, Clinique



Rejuvenating Priming Moisturizer, Dhs905 Victoria Beckham



The Good C Vitamin C Serum, Dhs552, Dr. Barbara Sturm



Fat Water Toner, Dhs105, Fenty Skin



La Solution 10 de Chanel Cream, Dhs405 for 30ml, Chanel



Elemis Pro-Collagen Cleansing Balm, Dhs250 for 100g, Elemis

WORDS: FIONA EMBLETON. PHOTOGRAPHY: JASON LLOYD-EVANS