

Neutrogena Hydro Boost Water Gel Cleanser, £7.99

The goal is to wash everything off without throwing your skin's hydration levels. This is just the ticket with a lightweight formula and hyaluronic acid, which holds on to moisture.

Dr Barbara Sturm Anti-Pollution Drops, £105 (Spacenk.com)

Your 'pretox' starts here: alteromonas ferment binds to pollution particles, then joins forces with the antioxidant herb purslane and cocoa seed to neutralise them and keep the skin's barrier strong.

Clinique Dramatically Different Hydrating Jelly, £31 (Fabled.com)

Like an invisible raincoat for your face. Hyaluronic acid and polymers form a film over skin to keep pollutants out and moisture in. Satisfyingly non-sticky, too.

Exuviance Probiotic Lysate Anti-Pollution Essence, £54

Pollution can cause an imbalance of bacteria on the skin's surface – read acne and sensitivity. Keep everything in check with this probiotic essence.

Neostrata Enlighten Illuminating Serum, £66

Research in Germany links air-traffic pollution with a 25 per cent increase in pigmentation on cheeks. Using clinical expertise, this serum breaks down the enzyme responsible for melanin production.

The Organic Pharmacy Stabilised Vitamin C Serum, £45

Inflammation? Pigmentation? Slackness? You need vitamin C. This is eco-certified, non-irritating and won't oxidise once open.

Origins Clear Improvement Charcoal Honey Mask, £30 (Fabled.com)

This is like a magnet to draw out pollution, but charcoal can leave drier skin feeling like paper. Here, wildflower honey stops the problem.

SKIN SOS

First defence

Pollution is threatening the planet – and it's ageing our skin, too. Changes to fix the bigger picture are slow, but the beauty world is hell-bent on saving our faces

It's the dirt you can't see that ages your skin most.

Pollution doesn't just sit on the surface of your skin, muddying it up like a windscreen. Nitrogen dioxide gas from car exhausts and toxic oily molecules attached to particulate matter – tiny specks of soot – can seep in. 'Once inside skin, they cause chronic inflammation,' says Dr Tom Mammone, vice president of skin physiology and pharmacology at Clinique. 'This overstimulates melanocytes, giving you pigmentation. Your skin's antioxidant and DNA systems also become overwhelmed so they no longer repair sufficiently, resulting in lines and sagging.' But can 'anti-pollution' face products help or are they just a marketing ploy? It's a bit of both. Unlike SPF, there's currently no comparable 'pollution protection factor'. However, the power of antioxidants such as vitamin C to protect against free radicals is backed by science. All that's happened is the emphasis has shifted from UV rays to pollution and the same chain reaction. So, if you're using an antioxidant serum daily, you've already ticked one

box in an urban skincare regime. Also remember: keep skin's moisture barrier intact with hydrating ingredients including hyaluronic acid. 'We've been able to prove that pollution tears tiny holes in the skin's barrier, causing moisture loss,' explains Dr Mammone. Ingredients that form a film over the skin's surface can help, too. 'Alteromonas ferment, from marine bacteria, is brilliant at preventing pollution particles from adhering to skin,' says dermatologist Dr Barbara Sturm. The other more obvious option is year-round sunscreen. 'Pollution is worse in winter due to surface inversion, where the air directly above the ground cools down much faster than the air above it,' explains Dr Sturm. 'The warmth builds a wall and traps pollutants in the cold air we're exposed to.' Finally, maintain a thorough cleansing regime at night as some particulate matter only measures 2.5 micrometres (that's one 400th of a millimetre – 20 times smaller than the diameter of a skin pore). You may not be able to avoid pollution, but these products are like armour against skin-scavenging smog.