The One Thing Dermatologists Wish You'd Stop Doing

The difference between good and bad skin comes down to this.
You're... Over-Exfoliating

“When my patients walk in with a ruddy face that looks darker than their neck, I know they're overdoing it with salicylic acids, glycolic acids, retinols, sonic cleansing systems or cleansing grains. They're all great options, but just can’t use them all together, or too often. For most women, a weekly exfoliation is definitely sufficient.” — Debra Jaliman, dermatologist and author of Skin Rules

You're... Touching Your Face Too Much

“I wish my patients would just stop touching their faces! Whether they're picking acne bumps or touching by habit, fingers on the face transfer bacteria.” This increases the risk of infection, and thus worsens acne and scarring.” — Ted Lain, dermatologist, ATX Dermatology, Austin

*Phones and earbuds also harbor tons of bacteria, so you should clean them often.

You're... Popping Zits

“Popping a pimple only pushes the bacteria and inflammation deeper in the skin, meaning it will take longer to heal, and will likely leave a scar. If you have a cyst or blackhead that’s really bothering you, go into your dermatologist and ask that they reduce swelling and release fluids hygienically. It costs a minimal fee and can save your skin.” — Lisa Garner, dermatologist, Garland, TX

You're... OD-ing on Anti-Agers
You're... Only Buying Designer

“Yes, there are some expensive skin care products that are excellent and worth the money, but there are many fabulous inexpensive options that work as well, or better, than the expensive options. Rather than paying an arm and a leg, look for powerful ingredients like hyaluronic acid, ceramide and retinol to appear in the top portion of the ingredient lists.” — Emmy Graber, dermatologist, Boston

You're... Using Toner

“It kills me when patients tell me they are using astringent on their skin. An alcohol-based solution strips the skin and gives people that “clean” feeling. If you have stubborn makeup that needs removing, find a gentle remover or towelette, then follow it with a pH-balanced cleanser.” — Kavita Mariwalla, dermatologist, West Islip, NY

You're... Switching Products Too Quickly

“I have women who, if they don’t see results within a week, they switch immediately to try something new. In general, I give something six weeks before considering another approach, although minor changes are usually visible in two.” — Francesca Fusco, dermatologist, New York City

You're... Using Too Many Products

“I have patients bring in bags of countless products that they use on their skin everyday. Some people bring in 20 or more! More is not always better, and it can cause irritation. Instead, keep things simple. In the morning, cleanse, moisturize with sunscreen and apply makeup. And at night, cleanse, apply antioxidants, retinol and eye cream. And once a week, exfoliate.” — Emmy Graber, dermatologist, Boston

You're... Cleansing With Soap

“I'm always telling my family and patients to stop using so much soap. It’s fine to use soap or body wash where you need it—underarms, groin, feet—but water alone is sufficient everywhere else. Soap pulls off your natural skin oils, which, no matter how well you moisturize, can never really be replaced.” — Paradi Mirmirani, dermatologist, Vallejo, CA

You're... Going to a MedSpa

“Laser treatments can easily go wrong and cause discoloration and even scarring. While you might see them offered at salons or spas, laser treatments should always be done by a board-
certified physician, not a nurse or technician.” — Emmy Graber, dermatologist, Boston

You're... Not Wearing Sunscreen

“Wearing sunscreen every day, even when it’s cloudy, even when you leave and return from work in the dark, is scientifically proven as the most effective way to preserve and attain a youthful appearance. Before spending hundreds of dollars on anti-aging products, apply broad-spectrum SPF 30—not just a makeup that has SPF—every single day, without exception. And don’t forget your chest and neck.” — Steven Wang, director of dermatologic surgery and dermatology, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New Jersey

You're... Using a Magnifying Mirror

“Please, stop looking at yourself with a 5x mirror! Not only are you magnifying small imperfections that no one can see, but you might mistake normal skin structures like pores or follicles for abnormal conditions or blemishes—which can lead to mistreatment of the skin.” — Steven Wang, director of dermatologic surgery and dermatology, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, New Jersey

You're... Leaving Out Your Makeup Brushes

“I’m horrified when I walk into a girlfriend’s apartment and go to the restroom only to find her makeup brushes sitting on top of the toilet bowl tank, uncovered. Or even just in her bedroom! There are aerosolized particles in the air that can settle on the brushes and transfer to your skin. Please, keep brushes in covered canisters!” — Kavita Mariwalla, dermatologist, West Islip, NY