

Cleaning Your Face: Be Gentle

Handout 1

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Cleaning is an essential part of caring for your complexion. Whatever your skin type – oily, dry, balanced or combination...the key to cleaning is to treat your skin gently.

Washing Your Face

Remove eye makeup. Use a soft sponge, cotton cloth or cotton balls and moisturizing cream to avoid damaging the delicate tissue around your eyes. If you wear heavy, waterproof makeup, you also may need to use an oil-based product, such as petroleum jelly.

Use lukewarm water. Avoid washing your face with very hot water, which can dry out your skin.

Avoid strong soaps. Strong soaps – those most capable of stripping oil from your skin – can leave your skin dry. These products don't contain additives such as moisturizers or moisture retainers. Products containing lauryl sulfates are harsher than products containing sarcosinates, sulfosuccinates and cocoamphodiacetates. A mild cleanser, typically labeled as such, may also be a good choice.

Avoid irritating additives. If you have sensitive skin, avoid products containing perfumes or dyes. These can irritate your skin and may possibly trigger an allergic response.

Use your hands to wash your face. Instead of using a washcloth, which can be abrasive, wash your face gently using your fingers.

Rinse thoroughly and pat dry. Use a soft cotton towel to dry your face.

Generally, wash your face once in the morning, once in the evening and after exercising or engaging in sports. If your skin is very dry and easily irritated, washing once a day may be enough to remove sweat and oil from your skin. If your skin is oily or prone to blackheads or acne – and you live in a warm and humid environment – you may need to wash it more frequently than twice a day. Otherwise, twice a day may be enough, especially if you use soaps or other cleansers designed for oily skin. These products strip more oil away from the skin and aren't as likely to contain oil or moisturizers.

You may also consider using a toner or astringent after washing your face. These products, which remove oil and soap residue, help make your skin feel tight and clean. They're generally drying and may contain water, alcohol or witch hazel, propylene glycol or salicylic acid. Some people find them to be too drying and irritating. Others find that they work well in removing excess oil.