

JULY 20, 2017 | SKIN

3 Tricks That Will Make Your Skincare Work 10 Times Better

by AMY LAWRENSEN



PHOTO: Zara

Get the full story in quick bullet points by scrolling to the bottom of the story.

In [Korea](#), there is such a thing as the three-second rule when it comes to applying your serums and moisturisers. According to a recent article on [Allure](#), there is a window of three seconds after cleansing that women have to apply their first skincare product. Why so? Well, it would seem that damp skin is more receptive to the active ingredients housed in that pricey bottle of serum or cream than dry skin. And since so many Korean beauty trends have stuck in recent years, it would be wise to bear this in mind next time you're washing your face. But we're not ones to trust a new trend on hearsay, so we called on skincare experts to find out whether this three-second rule stacks up. And, if it does, whether there any other timing factors we should be factoring in when applying product to get optimal results from our skincare routine? **Keep scrolling to find out how timing can affect your skin.**

The Three-Second Rule: Fact or Fiction?

“Damp skin is more permeable than dry skin,” says facialist [Debbie Thomas](#). “So technically you should get up to 10 times better absorption of your products if applied directly after cleansing. You don’t want it to be wet, but my advice is to apply your products within a minute of cleansing or washing your skin.”

Rabbia Aslam, clinical director at [HC MedSpa](#), suggests using a damp face cloth to remove excess cleanser and water from the face before applying your products to a damp face. “Similar to a sponge, dry skin will hold some moisture, however if the sponge (or in this case your skin) is damp, it will absorb and retain even more liquid.”

“While the skin is damp, it is best to then apply serums, which generally contain a higher concentration of actives,” adds aesthetic doctor [Maryam Zamani](#).

Make Your Skin Ever More Receptive

If damp skin is more receptive to skincare ingredients, it would make sense that exfoliated skin would be more open too, right? “An exfoliator will remove the barrier and buildup of dead skin cells, therefore any skincare applied to the surface will penetrate deeper into the layers than if an exfoliator was not used,” says Aslam.

To reap the benefits daily, Thomas recommends that you use a face wash with glycolic, mandelic or salicylic acids. “The reason I prefer this type of exfoliation is because it is more controlled and gentler than a typical ‘scrub’ with beads or grains that can scratch the skin meaning you can use it daily.”

But it’s not just that the exfoliator clears the way; it actually changes the skin to make it more receptive to certain skin-boosting ingredients. Much like Thomas, [David Jack](#), MBChB, recommends an acid-based exfoliator, “A low concentration of acid, such as lactic, will reduce the pH of the skin and allow much better access to the deeper layers of the skin by active products. The added benefit of slightly lowering the skin pH assists penetration of any acid-pH ingredient, such as vitamin C (ascorbic acid), hyaluronic acid and vitamin A (retinol).”

Take Advantage of Your Skin's Internal Clock

For years, scientists have understood that our bodies are governed by time, 24-hour circadian rhythms that cause us to sleep and wake with the movements of the sun. But it appears that rather than there just being one “master clock,” our bodies are kept in sync by multiple clock systems in most of our cells throughout the body. “When this system is disrupted, it results in premature tissue ageing, as well as a greater predisposition to developing skin tumours,” says Aslam. Our body regenerates at different times throughout the 24-hour window. “It is well known that the proliferation process takes place during the day at various times, many of us feel that our skin can feel a little tight and dehydrated around 4 p.m., this is a great time to rehydrate and boost the skin with a light face mist,” adds Aslam. But don’t spend money on an active-rich mist to sit on your desk, “Yes, you can use a mist easily during the day, but if you have makeup on you won’t get the full benefit of the mist,” says Thomas. In other words, save your money on your a.m. and p.m. products.

Cell turnover is at its highest at night. “It happens at least 30 times more rapidly at night than during the day, as this is when the regeneration process takes place,” says Aslam. “It is vital to effectively remove all impurities before applying your night time skincare products; we recommend active ingredients such as retinol. The rate of water loss and blood flow are 20 to 30% higher at night than in the morning or afternoon. Circadian rhythms in the skin affect the biology of appearance and also have a profound effect on the absorption of applied treatment products,” adds Aslam.

Come the morning with water loss having been ramped up, your skin may feel a little dehydrated. If this is the case, make sure you factor a hydrating product like This Works [No Wrinkles Midnight Moisture](#) (£46) into your nighttime routine.

“Our cortisol levels (the stress hormone) are usually highest when we wake up in the morning (8 to 9 a.m.),” says Jack, “so the levels of potential skin inflammation may be higher at this time generally. I always suggest using products containing things like vitamin C and E at this stage, which have anti-inflammatory and strong antioxidant activity.”

Pressed for time or just CBA for the long read? Here's the short take in bullet form:

- *Korean women apply their serum three seconds after cleansing to maximise the efficacy.*
- *"Damp skin is more permeable than dry skin," says facialist [Debbie Thomas](#). "So technically you should get up to 10 times better absorption of your products if applied directly after cleansing."*
- *Make sure skin is damp, not wet.*
- *A daily acid-rich face wash will slough away dead skin cells and makeup that can block skincare ingredients from getting to where they need to.*
- *Acids also change the pH in the skin, making it more receptive to acid-pH ingredients like vitamin C (ascorbic acid), hyaluronic acid and vitamin A (retinol).*
- *Cell turnover is increased at night, so take advantage and use retinol to speed up the process.*
- *Skin loses water overnight, so use a moisturising night product.*
- *In the morning, the cortisol spike that helps you wake up can cause inflammation. Use a product with vitamin C or E, which are both antioxidant and anti-inflammatory.*