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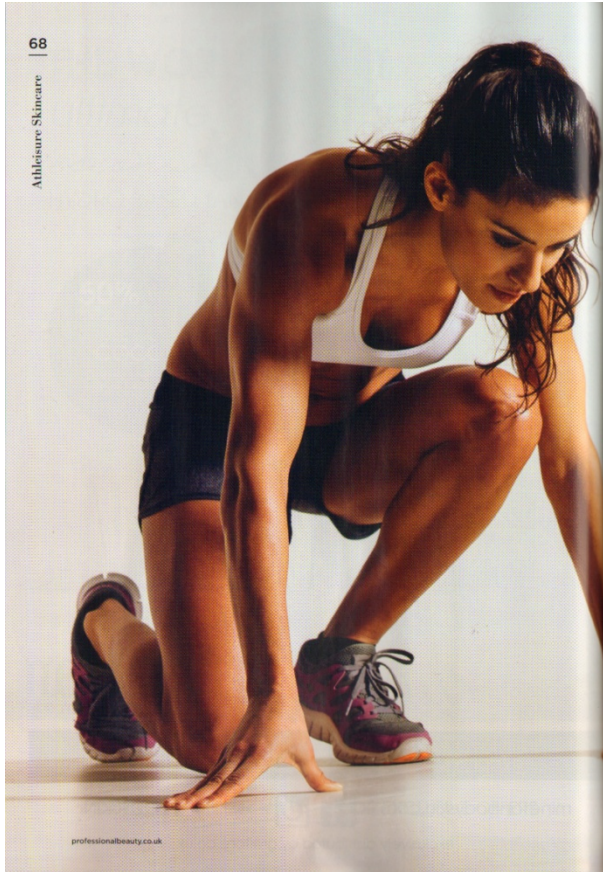
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Fighting FIT

Active skincare that promises to keep gym-goers looking good while they work out is gaining traction. AMANDA PAULEY finds out how you can tap into the "athleisure beauty" trend

"Athleisure beauty" – heard of it? Well, you're about to, as it's the latest thing insiders think will take the industry by storm. The trend is heralding a new era of skincare and make-up that's in sync with your skin as you exercise and it's already begun, with a new breed of gym-friendly make-up that stays in place while you sweat it out.

Although the trend for athleisure – products designed for athletic activities – has been booming in the fashion world for some time, beauty enthusiasts are only just tapping into it and are looking for pro products that bestow a fresh-from-cardio glow.

"In the last few years, there's been a huge focus on wellness, with mindfulness, getting active and the boom in healthy restaurants coming to the fore," says Gemma Lea, national training manager for

professional skincare brand Comfort Zone. "Clients want a 360-degree approach to healthy living that includes fitness, diet and skincare. People are wanting to look good and feel good."

But what does this mean for high-street salons? Well, it's a huge opportunity to boost revenue and gain a new client base. There are now more than 9.7 million fitness club members in the UK, with one in every seven Brits signed up to a gym, according to research from LeisureDB's 2017 State of the UK Fitness Industry report.

This demographic takes wellness seriously and are willing to pay for high-performance, sweat-proof and non-clogging products that seamlessly slip into their active lifestyles – just look at the statistics.

According to market analyst The NPD Group, sales of prestige beauty products doubled in the first half of this year, reaching £60m in the six months from

January to June 2017 (compared to the same period in 2016), and one of the biggest areas of growth is products with long-wearing and oil-controlling properties. So, it's no flash-in-the-pan trend.

WORK IT OUT

Catering to clients' desire to look good in and out of the gym is easy with the right approach, and it all starts with education. "Many clients have never thought about healthy skin relating to other aspects of their lives, which is why you need to use social media to combine images of exercise and wellbeing with taking care of their skin," explains Dr Howard Murad, founder of skincare brand Murad.

It's also common for fitness fans to focus on their physique and forget about their skin, so communicate to them in their language. "Gym-goers are very aware of their bodies and are willing to invest in their wellbeing, so explain to them that a good facial or body massage is like >

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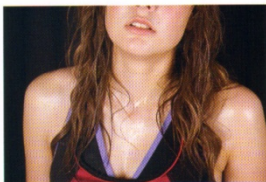
taking your skin to the gym," says Nicci Anstey, global training and education director for British skincare brand Elemis.

"Your salon menu should also clearly state the skincare benefits of regular visits, with treatments that meet the clients' needs – whether it's a 30-minute facial that they could add onto the end of their gym routine or a more intensive 60-minute treatment to tackle both face and body."

It's also about explaining the effect exercise has on the skin and what can happen if they don't have a good skincare routine in place pre- and post-workout. "As your heart beats faster, it stimulates circulation, so you get much more blood pumping around the body, taking nutrients to the skin as well as carrying away waste products such as dirt and oil," explains Tracy Tamaris, co-founder of the International Institute for Anti-Ageing (IIAA), which distributes professional skincare range Environ and supplement range Advanced Nutrition Programme.

"However, if clients don't cleanse straight after a workout, there's a chance all those things that have been flushed out could go straight back into the skin, resulting in a breakout." But the dreaded post-workout breakout isn't the only skin plight gym-goers face, with dehydration, oiliness and premature ageing among other common complaints.

"When we sweat, the body loses water due to evaporation, which makes us dehydrated and can cause premature ageing," says Rabia Aslam, clinical director



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for HC MedSpa, which has four clinics in London and Hertfordshire. "Applying a light-weight moisturiser pre-workout that contains humectants locks in moisture and protects skin from premature ageing, fine lines and wrinkles."

If your client also suffers with redness post-workout, Aslam advises prescribing products that contain white tea, sea whip, camomile and bisabolol to calm and cool the surface.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

However, some fitness fanatics are reluctant to apply serums and creams before exercising, believing that their oily complexion is the result of overloading the skin with too many products – a common misconception.

"Many people, especially runners, assume they're getting an oily T-zone or residue on their skin due to too much product, but most of the time it's because they're dehydrated," says Donna Tait, co-founder of British skincare brand Katherine Daniels. "They start stripping the skin using harsh products but it fights back by producing more oil, then the client starts using even more aggressive products. It becomes a vicious circle."

During consultation, address these issues by explaining why they happen and how they can be treated. Give advice on the skincare habits clients need to add into their exercise routine to prevent them. Tait advises investing in a "gentle cleansing gel or micellar water to cleanse and tone the skin and a cream packed with hyaluronic acid to hydrate." Runners should also invest in a decent SPF to protect their skin from UV rays and environmental aggressors. >



All the experts agree that skin should be clean and hydrated before embarking on any exercise routine. "A cleanse and tone, followed by a lightweight hydrator, will address the basic needs of skin during a workout," explains Murad. "But those with oily skin should use products that are non-comedogenic to allow the flow of sweat and oils and avoid pore clogging."

Wearing make-up during an exercise class is a grey area but the consensus among most skin experts is that less is more. "If wearing make-up gives someone the confidence to go and workout then great, but they need to make sure the products they use are gym-compatible and that they're cleansing the skin properly afterwards," explains Lea.

"However, I feel the skin should be as clear as possible when you exercise so it can work efficiently – to detoxify and perspire – otherwise you're stopping certain systems in the body from working as they're designed to."

Post-workout, it's vital clients double cleanse "to rid the skin of excess oils, sweat and toxins," says Aslam, and then follow their regular skincare routine to protect skin from further dehydration and environmental damage.

NO SWEAT

But to cash in on the athleisure beauty trend and successfully target this market, it's not just about giving expert advice in consultation and post-treatment, you also need to entice people in to your business in the first place. The key is getting fitness fanatics to see your salon as an essential part of their 360-degree approach to wellness.

"If you're a salon rather than a spa and don't have a fitness element in your business then it's worth linking up with a personal trainer (PT) and/or healthy cafes in your area to create bespoke packages. For example, the client could have a session with the PT in the morning, followed by a healthy lunch and then come into the salon in the afternoon for a treatment. All round it's a win-win," explains Lea.

Collaborating with gyms is another way to attract new clients and it would be criminal not to if fitness-fans are your targeted demographic. In the last 12 months, 272 new public and private fitness facilities have opened in the UK, up from 224 in 2016, found the 2017 State of the UK Fitness Industry Report.

"Advertise your salon in gyms and see if you can collaborate with them – for example by offering a free min treatment to people when they join the gym to help get customers through the door, benefitting both the fitness facility and your salon," says Tamaris. "You should also make the trainers aware of what you do so they can refer you to clients for example, to those suffering with workout breakouts."

Anstey says the best packages are those that help both companies in a mutually beneficial way. "Education is so important to build a trusted relationship with clients. You could offer samples at the gym for people to try or host skin masterclasses and mini treatment demos, as well as the gym offering taster sessions of classes to your clients."

Many salons that stock Murad take a different approach, connecting with nutritionists and lifestyle coaches to offer serious advice on nutrition, skincare and relaxation.



"We provide recipes for the skin that gym cafes can make for members and this can bring them to the salon for treatments," adds Murad.

So, be ahead of the curve by tailoring your menu to this booming client base. "More and more gym-goers are realising how beneficial skincare products are and not just for now, but for the long-term," adds Aslam. >

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