

# Cream de la Cream

The appliance of science: Lexie Williamson takes a closer look at what's lurking in her bathroom cabinet

feature

Slumped in front of *Sex and The City* recently, having survived another day as chauffeur, boxing referee and human bucking-bronco for two small boys, the usual ads flashed up for anti-ageing creams and I found myself pondering that eternal question: what, precisely, is a 'liposome'?

Come to think of it I'm pretty much in the dark when it comes to 'AHA fruit acids,' 'retinoids' and 'ceramides' and will my face shrivel up like a prune if I don't slap on some 'coenzyme Q10'?

It was so simple in my mother's day; she rubbed in a bit of cold cream to keep the old crows' feet at bay and let time take its course. Now knackered mums the wrong side of 30 like myself need a PhD in chemistry to buy a moisturiser.

Even the most traditional face cream seems to be backed by a fully-fledged 'institute'. The word conjures up the image of a man in a lab coat flinging down his clipboard to proclaim 'I've got it, the secret to ever-youthful skin is HydrOaqua B5!'

The marketing tactic used to target women like me - who baulk at the Botox and plastic surgery so beloved of cash-rich celebrities - is obviously to blind them with science.

Or should I say pseudo science. For instance, a quick peep into my bathroom cabinet tells me that my moisturiser boasts of offering a 'multi-vitamin complex' which I conclude is probably a good thing, but this then begs the question of precisely how those vitamins get into the skin to work their magic. And does it mean that if they are seeping nicely into my dermis I can swap those vitamin-packed blueberries and steamed broccoli for chocolate éclairs and chips?

If the adverts don't leave you confused then beauty editors will. One women's magazine I read recently

earnestly advised its readers to use 'phyto-hormones' and let's not forget those 'retinoids' and 'amino peptides' in the battle for peachier skin. If you believe all the hype, your simple face cream possesses super powers: it can 'smooth,' 'brighten,' and 'replenish' your tired old skin, not to mention 'continuously hydrate'.

Despite what the beauty editors tell us, we all know in our heart of hearts that good skin is down to following a few golden rules. The first tip is to neck gallons of water; not something to be tried when out shopping unless in dashing distance of a McDonald's toilet. Then there's the classic 'get at least eight hours of sleep', which is bound to raise a wry smile from the lips of many parents and those trying to actually have a life.

Third on the list is probably not frying yourself as a 16 year-old for two weeks solid in the Ibiza sun and then repeating yearly thereafter (whoops) as well as smoking, drinking, gorging yourself on Dairy Milk or indeed indulging in anything else remotely fun. The final good skin mantras are eat stacks of organic fruit and vegetables and exercise, exercise, exercise.

But beyond the rules then good skin is also undeniably down to genes. If your mum has the face of an airbrushed cover girl then you probably will too and if she doesn't you've got two options: get a fashionable eye-skimming fringe cut and invest in polo necks, or be like Brigitte Bardot and get ready not to give a damn.

In the meantime be like me and slap on the Hydroaqua B5 or whatever other futuristic-sounding cream lurks within your bathroom cabinet. OK, so I'm a hypocrite having sniggered at the TV ads but the marketing folk at Beauty Inc. have, irritatingly, triggered one tiny but nagging thought on the subject of anti-ageing creams: what if there is actually something in it? So on it goes, morning and evening, coenzyme Q10 and all.



Youthful skin model's own



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