

FOREVER DISCOVERING WITH HOUSE OF FRASER

Beauty Resolution

Skin not playing ball? Here's how to replenish your complexion after weeks of overindulgence

January. Famed for positive mantras, green juices and new gym memberships. But let's be honest, best intentions aside, these endeavours are often laughably short-lived. Still, overhauling your skincare regime is a resolution you should stick to. Restoring skin to its default setting will help counter weeks of overindulgence and ease you into the New Year fresh-faced. Plus, it's easier to stock up on silky new serums than banish red wine, right? Except there's one snag. It's a slow process. Weeks may pass and, despite your will to drink three litres of water a day, your skin will still look far from dewy, those pesky flakes won't shift, the papery lines haven't budged – and what's with the redness?

While it's tempting to blame misbehaving skin on biting-cold weather and excessive central heating, there are more pressing issues to consider. All those espresso martinis during the festive season will have sent your glow AWOL. "Extended periods of drinking alcohol robs skin of vitamin A, which is needed to rev up cell turnover so that healthy, light-reflecting cells can rise to the surface," explains Dr Sarah Shah, specialist in aesthetic medicine and member of the Royal College of General Practitioners. Not only that, but cocktail overload can also cause telangiectasia, aka spider veins, where tiny blood vessels widen and form red lines on your skin. Yet booze's biggest crime against your complexion is suppressing the hormone vasopressin, which helps us reabsorb water. The result? Skin cells become seriously parched, causing sallowness and fine lines.

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STYLIST

Late nights play havoc with hormones, too. Getting only a few hours in bed means you're unlikely to reach a deep level of sleep, inhibiting your body from producing growth hormone somatropin, which skin needs to stimulate collagen. Inadequate somatropin also decreases moisture levels in the skin, which can send your complexion's pH levels below the magical 5.5 mark, leading to inflammation.

As for those winter walks you took? They probably subjected your skin to an onslaught of free radicals as air-pollution levels can rise in winter due to 'temperature inversion'. London based facialist Kate Kerr explains: "Cold air gets trapped underneath a layer of warm air, literally holding the smoke and carbon monoxide down so it's trapped at our level and can't be carried away. These pollution particles have a knack of sticking to our make-up, causing skin damage."

And hibernating indoors is no passport to complexion perfection. Back-to-back Netflix means you're starved of the vitamin D we get from sunlight. "Your immune system needs this to fight off 'blue light' radiation from TVs and digital devices. "Blue light poses a danger to skin as unlike UVB and UVA rays, the wavelength of this type of 'visible' light allows it to penetrate skin at a deeper level. Excessive blue light exposure can not only affect sleep hormone melatonin, but also magnify hyperpigmentation and inflammation," explains leading dermatologist Dr Howard Murad. A lack of vitamin D can also lead to excess production of oil in the skin, increasing pore blockage and bacteria that can cause acne.

And burning candles indoors releases airborne particles that can be as damaging as outdoor pollution, disrupting the skin's barrier function and increasing sensitivity. Luckily, the industry is ringing in the New Year with game-changing breakthroughs, from products that hydrate rather than moisturise skin (yes, they're different) to using adaptogens (natural ingredients that adapt and respond to skin's specific needs) and the right type of antioxidants. Here's your guide to the effects of overindulgence and getting back your glow.

The January Hit-List

1. ADJUST YOUR MOISTURE LEVELS

You may think you have dry skin, but it's highly likely you don't. Dehydrated skin can be tight, flaky, sore and lacking water – dry skin lacks oil. If you have fine, papery lines on your skin and break out in spots after using rich moisturiser, it's water you need, not oil. Too much to drink two litres of cold water daily in winter? Try eating more H₂O. "Fruit and vegetables are high in water and, as hydration is actually formed in the structure of these foods, it's gradually released into cells rather than passing straight through," says Dr Murad. Next, use products to plump up parched skin. Look for the likes of hyaluronic acid (a natural acid present in the body that holds around 1,000 times its weight in water) and glycerin, a natural moistener. These won't interfere with natural moisturising processes or oil-production. Try The Ordinary Matrixyl 10% + HA, £10, in the morning and Filorga NCTF Reverse Mat, £75, at night.

2. GET YOUR GLOW

Forget abrasive exfoliators that can encourage excess sebum production. Try retinol, a topical form of vitamin A that aids healthy skin-cell turnover. It's clever stuff: retinol binds itself to receptors in our cells, which help to normalise the production of new skin, clearing breakouts and reducing the overproduction of oil. Try Murad Retinol Youth Renewal Serum, £65. It contains time-released retinol, so you needn't worry about irritating sensitive skin, and a hydroxypinacolone retinoate – a rocket-fuelled vitamin A derivative that can rapidly trickle into the skin, enhancing its repairing abilities.

3. ADDRESS YOUR PH

Late nights knock your skin's pH levels out of whack. pH stands for 'potential hydrogen' and is used to describe the skin barrier's acid-alkaline ratio, which ranges from 0 (most acidic) to 14 (most alkaline). If your skin is plagued by severe dryness and lines this could be a telltale sign that your acid mantle is too alkaline and falling prey to bacteria. If your skin is inflamed, oily, prone to breakouts or painful to the touch, that indicates it's too acidic. To bring back its sweet spot of 5.5, turn to Darphin Exquisage Beauty Revealing Cream, £65, which strengthens the protective barrier by feeding skin probiotics.

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4. REPLENISH YOUR SKIN'S ANTIOXIDANTS

When skin absorbs pollution or digital radiation, it causes a burst of free radicals – these are short-lived molecules that can leave skin dull-looking, sensitive and fatigued. Antioxidants such as catechin, zeaxanthin and lutein, found in matcha tea, goji berries and broccoli, all share the ability to stabilise free radicals and create an invisible shield against environmental aggressors. You’ll find these antioxidants in Elemis Superfood Day Cream, £42, which is designed to restore radiance to lacklustre complexions typically associated with urban living. For the delicate eye area, seek out bareMinerals Skinlongevity Vital Power Eye Gel Cream, £23. It harnesses antioxidants found in California poppy and Lempuyang ginger, and diminishes dark circles.

5 . RESET YOUR SKIN PROTECTION

The lack of sunshine right now means your body isn't exposed to the UVB rays it needs for the natural production of vitamin D. This is bad news as this 'sunshine vitamin' has an antiinflammatory effect on healthy skin, helping to protect it against winter woes such as psoriasis.

So, until spring arrives at least, it's worth adding an oral vitamin D supplement to your beauty arsenal. After your morning cleanse, envelop skin in Elizabeth Arden City Skin SPF50, £45. It forms a breathable 'second skin' across the face to shield you from environmental toxins.

6 . ADJUST YOUR YOUTH-BOOSTING VITAMIN LEVELS

Your green juice may pack a vitamin-rich punch, but your skin is the final organ in your body to get the nutrients it needs, so apply vitamins topically, too. Step forward, brightening vitamin C. Clinique Fresh Pressed Daily Booster, £58, contains a lavish 10% of vitamin C and comes in a powder form, which means it maintains more potency than a cream or liquid. Finally, go to bed wearing Decléor Hydra Floral White Petal Skin Perfecting Sleeping Mask, £34, which drip-feeds vitamin B3 into the skin to help increase the production of collagen. Your skin will thank you for it in the morning.