

The Body Part That's Making You Look Older

It's one of the first areas to show signs of aging. Here's what you can do about it.

Know the Culprits

Your neck is extremely vulnerable to wrinkles—and yet many of us overlook this zone in our daily skincare regimens. "Every day I have patients tell me that their neck bothers them more than their face," says dermatologist Elizabeth Hale, M.D. This spot is constantly exposed to the elements—sun, wind, pollution—and rarely covered up. Skin on the neck, relative to the face, also has fewer stem cells that heal and repair. "So, it's less able to recover from environmental [factors], like UV exposure, that contribute to skin aging," she says, adding, "Plus, the skin is thin and more prone to dryness and crepiness."

Consider Your Screen Time Too

"I'm starting to see premature aging of the neck, even in young millennials," Hale says. "We're constantly looking down on our phones and devices, and this head-tucked-down position contributes to deep horizontal lines developing on the neck." Clinical skincare physician assistant Laura Dyer, MSHS, adds that this "continued crinkling of the skin can cause a breakdown of tissue integrity causing permanent wrinkles." Although most of us can't unplug entirely, try to be more conscious of the position of your phones, laptops and computers, she says, and keep them in "a more neutral place—at eye level—as often as possible."

Do Your Same Face Routine, Only Lower Down

"People tend to apply daily sunscreen, or at least makeup with some SPF, to their faces, but the neck gets completely neglected until patients start to notice signs of aging, which is often too late," Hale says. A good rule: "Anything you do to your face in regards to skincare should be continued down the neck and include the décolletage," Dyer advises. In the morning, apply an antioxidant serum with vitamin C. This ingredient "stimulates collagen and reduces pigmentation to even out skin and make it appear more radiant," says plastic surgeon Melissa Doft, MD. Finish with an ultrahydrating moisturizer—Dyer is a fan of Chanel's [La Solution 10 de Chanel](#), which is fragrance free (and won't interfere with perfume if you wear it on your décolletage).

Be Vigilant About SPF

Apply a broad-spectrum formula to your neck every day, says facialist Angelina Umansky of Spa Radiance in San Francisco. Dyer likes SkinCeuticals [Physical Fusion UV Defense SPF 50](#), which contains zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. Unlike other physical sunscreens that can go on chalky, she says, this fluid "goes on smooth, doesn't leave a white residue and stays in place if you sweat," which means it also won't transfer onto the neckline of your clothing.

Heal and Repair Overnight

In the evening, Doft recommends applying a retinol cream (or a prescription version, like Retin-A). This powerful anti-aging ingredient will "help thicken the skin and increase collagen production to improve texture, reduce wrinkles and increase smoothness," she says. But Hale points out that since the skin on the neck is thinner and more sensitive than other areas of your body, "less is more when it comes to retinol." Applying a small dot is often enough, she says.

Decide If You Want to Do More

Naturally over time, fat "pads" in the face drop, which creates "jowls and a poorly defined neckline," Doft says. Eventually, vertical bands start to form along the front of the neck, she explains, and "there appears to be much more skin than when you were young." This sagging generally happens around age 40 or later, she says. Although topical products can improve the surface, if you're looking for deeper toning and firming results, you might want to consider the professional treatment options. To help improve pigment and texture, Hale turns to a fractional resurfacing laser, like Fraxel Re:Store Dual. Dyer's go-to is the CoolMini, a nonsurgical procedure that involves freezing fat cells, which, she says, can "help define and tighten the neck and jawline." Doft, meanwhile, recommends EuroThread Lift, "a new treatment that's helpful in lifting the neck for a limited amount of time—about one year—and for filling in the horizontal lines that often form on the neck."