

Essay No. 18



"I DON'T THINK OF MY SKIN
AS SAGGY...I THINK OF IT
AS RELAXED-FIT!"

SKIN DEEP

Did I ever think that as I aged my legs would one-day resemble a roadmap? My veins, both thick and thin, travel down and around my limbs making them look like highways and small back streets. The bruises, scratches, and bumps that complete the twisting roadway represent outlying towns and pit stops. My favorite liver spot is a diner.

I don't feel old and, for sure, don't act old, but that's not what the mirror says or what other people see. Fine lines, smile lines, brown spots, crow's feet, and skin tags have replaced a firm face and clear complexion. Plus, other skin irritants, like itching.

Despite thinking I did everything humanly possible for my skin, I must say that looking in the mirror provides no payoff. But perhaps it's because I didn't know then what I know now.

I never really gave much thought to my skin in my younger days. I never thought about staying out of the sun and using moisturizers, retinols, and what have you. But with aging comes a whole new set of dos and don'ts.

Now I **DO** use sunscreen. When I'm at the beach I **DO** sit under an umbrella. I **DO** try to eat the right foods. I **DO** use moisturizers. I **DO** exercise. And I **DO** try to get enough sleep.

I **DON'T** smoke. I **DON'T** use soap on my face because it's drying. And whether or not I drink too much depends on the evening.

I am a five-foot-three woman in search of much needed but lost elastin and collagen—a woman who knows that trying to defy gravity is a lost cause. So, I do what I can and hope for the best.

Dermatologist Clifford Berck says:

- Having a facial every so often definitely helps. It cleans the skin; it gets rid of the dead cells; it moisturizes and plumps it up.
- Try to stay upbeat because frowning and stress cause wrinkles.
- Stay out of the sun. It is a nuclear reactor. If you need Vitamin D, take a supplement.
- Use mild cleansers and increase the use of moisturizers with a minimum SPF of thirty.
- Limit alcohol.
- The use of retinoids should only be prescribed by your dermatologist because each individual's skin type and tolerance varies.

Also, self-tanners help reduce the appearance of varicose and spider veins on your legs. And you could also wear support hose.

Even though we can't be in complete control of risk factors that negatively impact our skin, we are in control of our behavior.

So, behave yourself.

*Wear a smile and have friends;
wear a scowl and have wrinkles.*
—George Eliot