

The Most Unmistakable Sign of Aging; Wrinkles

Aging is an undisputable fact of life that transgresses any human intervention. The most unmistakable sign of aging is the formation of wrinkles, and furrows on the face. Hormonal changes, heredity, and the skin's inability to retain moisture are natural aging factors contributing to the formation of wrinkles, and are unavoidable. External factors such as over exposure to sunlight, pollution, stress, smoking and poor dietary habits are factors that we do have control over. All these factors make the skin less supple, thereby reducing skin tone creating a loss of firmness, and the appearance of wrinkles. Skin begins to show signs of wrinkles when skin cells die off faster than what can be replaced by normal regeneration. With time, these wrinkles deepen, reaching the supporting dermal layer. When the dermis loses its elasticity, deeper, and more permanent wrinkles form. While all these changes are taking place, gravity exerts its influence by pulling at the skin, causing it to sag.

Harsh environmental conditions cause free radicals to form; as a result, the skin becomes rough and dry resulting in loss of flexibility, and firmness. The sun is the major cause of unwanted changes in the skin, causing a cascade of events. UV radiation from the sun causes collagen to break down, resulting in an abnormal rebuilding process. Over time, this abnormal rebuilding process leads to the development of wrinkles. Beginning at childhood, it is important to use a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15, a brimmed hat, and other protective clothing. Avoid sunbathing and limit exposure between 10:00am and 3:00pm.

In addition to the devastating effects of cigarettes, smoking causes collagen damage much like sun light which lead to wrinkles. Smoking reduces the amount of oxygen supplied to the skin by reducing circulation, and compromises the skin's ability to fend off free radicals. All of these factors considered separately and together, cause the appearance of wrinkles.

While the formation of wrinkles, for the most part are unavoidable, treatments have been developed to address the various types. Products, and procedures that increase the thickness of the skin, or that remove damaged skin are the goal in wrinkle treatments. Moisturizers are perfect for superficial, surface deep wrinkles. Facial creams would be the next line of defense, Retinoic acid, used successfully in treating acne, has been shown to improve the surface texture of the skin, and increase dermal collagen. Alpha hydroxy acids also show promise in reversing some of the effects of the sun. Resurfacing is one of the most common Laser treatments used for wrinkles. These procedures improve wrinkles by vaporizing damaged skin cells and allowing the remaining collagen to become thicker and healthier. Botox, is an injection that temporarily reduces or eliminates frown lines, forehead creases, crows feet near the eyes and thick bands in the neck. The toxin blocks the nerve impulses, temporarily paralyzing the muscles that cause wrinkles.

There are several practical steps that can be taken to hasten, or delay the appearance of wrinkles. It is important to stay out of the sun as much as possible. Try to avoid rubbing your eyes, the tendency is to stretch delicate skin. Maintain a stable body weight, a constant weight gain or loss can cause the skin to sag. Keep your skin moisturized to maintain its elasticity and suppleness. Avoid alcohol and smoking. Drink plenty of water. Eight glasses of water a day is the recommended amount necessary for adequate hydration. Spend 15 minutes each morning and evening exercising the muscles in your face. Try to think about your face several times a day and totally relax all your facial muscles.

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