

General Skincare Tips and Information

By Nelson X. Simmons, MD

Skin is the largest organ of the human body. It covers the body entirely and is primarily comprised of three layers. The outermost or upper layer of the skin is called the epidermis (the part that we see, feel and touch). The epidermis consists of several layers and is mainly made of dead epithelial skin cells. Directly beneath the epidermis is the second skin layer called the dermis. This layer has tiny blood vessels, nerve endings, oil and sweat glands, and hair follicles. The dermis also contains collagen and elastic tissue, which keeps the skin firm, plump, and strong. The third layer underlying the dermis is called the subcutaneous layer and is made up of fatty tissue that acts as a foundation for the dermis.

Your skin has four main functions: Protection from the elements, controlling our fluid and temperature balance, protecting us from UV radiation, and protecting us from infections. Protecting your skin is important and requires a purposeful approach. There are a few basic principles I feel everyone should follow. These include

- Avoid excessive exposure to sunlight (use sunscreens, sunblock, and protective clothes)
- Regular checks of moles, skin discolorations, and sweaty areas (between toes, armpits, or groin area)
- Apply topical over-the-counter moisturizers (to prevent dryness and cracks)
- Avoid walking barefooted

However, there is much more to caring for your skin than is listed above. Below, I have listed my essential tips for general skincare. You can make this section as straightforward or as complicated as you want. You can decide to spend tons of money or care for your skin on a budget. Regardless of your approach, caring for your skin requires that you have a plan and that you are consistent. I have listed the five basic categories that I focus on when discussing caring for skin with my patients.

1. Cleaning your skin
2. Avoiding skin breakdown and aging

3. Caring for the skin around the eyes (this part of your face requires a unique approach)
4. Moisturize your skin
5. Protect your skin from being damaged by the sun (#4 and #5 are often combined into a single product)

Below I have listed several skin products that I like. Please note there are many skin lines that you can pick from, and the ones I list below are not necessarily better than the others. However, I like these lines because the products are high quality, easy to access, and affordable.

If you are getting treatments to improve your skin (such as facials, Morpheus8, or lasers) you are investing both time and money to keep to stay healthy. Look over the options below and see which approach you feel is best for you. If you have a different system that you like, that is great. Just make sure you have each category covered. Regardless of which approach you choose, caring for your skin is critical to keeping your skin healthy and looking as good as you feel.

Introductory skincare line:

Recommend: CeraVe: \$50-100 initial investment

Available at most stores, including Kroger, Walmart, and Target. CeraVe is an excellent skincare line and will provide you with high-quality products designed to keep your skin. Here is an example of using CeraVe to treat all five categories I mentioned above.

- Cleanse: [Hydrating Facial Cleanser](#)
- Antiaging: [Hydrating Hyaluronic Acid Serum](#)
- Eye Care: [Eye Repair Cream](#)
- Moisturize: [Daily Moisturizing Lotion/Cream](#)
- Protect [Hydrating Mineral Sunscreen SPF 50 or Ultra-Light Moisturizing Lotion SPF 30](#). Note: In this last example, the moisturizer has a sunscreen built in. Combining these products makes it easier to hit all the steps.

Mid Level Skincare Line:

Recommend: La Roche Posay \$150-\$200 initial investment

La Roche Posay is also available locally at stores such as Walgreens.

- Cleanse: [Purifying Foaming Cleanser](#)

- Antiaging: [Pure Hyaluronic Acid Serum](#)
- Eye Care: [Substiane Anti Aging Eye Cream](#)
- Moisturize: [Double Repair Moisturizer](#)
- Protect: [Antioxidant Serum with SPF 50 Sunscreen](#)

In both examples above, you hit all five categories using the different skincare products. It is perfectly fine to combine lines (I like the Cerave Hydrating Face Wash and the Double Repair Moisturizer by La Roche Posay). There are other products that are often used such as toners, retinols, and Vitamin C. These extra products are designed with specific purposes and should be used on a as-needed basis. If you are unsure if you need a specific product such as retinol, talk to your doctor.

Medical grade skincare lines.

Investments start at \$200

There are many medical-grade skin lines, including Alastin, Revisions, Obagi, ZO, and Skinceuticals (to name a few). The main difference between a medical-grade skin line and an over-the-counter skin line is the purity of the product, the specific formulation of the product with guidance by skin experts, and ease of access. These skin lines can only be found through a medical provider, medical spa, or an online source that has set up accounts with the specific companies that make these products. In my office, I carry Alastin primarily to help my patients prepare for their skin procedures. However, I do like a few of their daily products that I use on my trouble areas (eyes).

Medical-grade skin lines tend to take skincare to another level by adding more steps to caring for your skin. The basics are the same, but it takes more time to execute each step. Ultimately the results tend to be better if you can be consistent with your approach (**the most important word being consistent**). It doesn't matter how much you spend on your skincare line if it sits in a bottle and you only use it periodically.

I hope this helps.