



WE TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT THE CHANGING FACE OF THE COSMETICS INDUSTRY AND THE NEW METHODS WOMEN ARE TURNING TO IN AN ATTEMPT TO SLOW THE AGEING PROCESS

VANITY FAIR

Women have been on the quest to look younger since the dawn of time. From Cleopatra's milk and honey baths to the mud and crocodile excrement face masks of ancient Greece, and the even more permanent measures such as the skin-stripping chemical peels and face-wrenching lifts of the '80s – it seems there's no end to the lengths we will go to in the never-ending pursuit of a more youthful appearance.

MAKING THE CUT

Technology has come a long way and the world is ready for a less invasive and less costly alternative to the surgical facelift, which all too often leaves you with everything you need to smile tucked behind your ears. As a result of this new demand, medical professionals and cosmetics companies are climbing on the bandwagon, offering beauty longevity without having to resort to a nip and tuck. Now, a dizzying array of anti-ageing lotions, potions and pills have emerged, which promise to smooth and renew your skin like never before.

ONLY A NUMBER

It's, therefore, not surprising that the anti-ageing industry is growing exponentially and showing no signs of slowing down. The industry is estimated to be worth a whopping \$274 billion, a figure that is equal to the GDP of the UAE. Those wishing to turn back time or slow it down before it takes its toll are clamouring for botox, fillers, powerful anti-ageing creams and the relatively new kid on the block, cosmeceuticals. This term refers to cosmetics that contain active pharmaceutical ingredients. However, unlike standard pharmaceuticals, cosmeceuticals are not required to be approved by the US Food and

Drug Administration (FDA). In fact, despite its huge following, the category is not even recognised by the FDA – but that has not affected the demand.

The cosmeceuticals industry serves a market of consumers who're no longer satisfied with promises of superficial and sensory changes in the skin, such as plumping, smoothing and softening, but want ingredients that affect real change.

Many of these wonder active ingredients were actually discovered by scientists in moments of pure serendipity. For example, Nasa experimented with LED technology to attempt to grow plants in outer space, but discovered the rejuvenating and wound-healing properties on the skin instead. And idebenone, the antioxidant-rich active in Elizabeth Arden's Prevage range, was originally developed to treat degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's.

COSMETIC EVOLUTION

What's next in the search for the proverbial fountain of youth? If lobsters never age and geckos regenerate their tails, the world really is the oyster of all those smart scientists who aid us in our quest for beauty and health in the long term – and it seems it's stem cells that are the mother of regeneration.

SA's own pioneering heart surgeon Dr Christiaan Barnard once famously remarked that 'ageing is a disease – a terminal disease', which is probably why he did extensive work in stem-cell therapy, one of the heroes in the cosmeceutical game, long before the rest of the world.

Totipotent plant stem cells are cells that are able to regenerate any part of a plant, and are excellent in supporting our own stem cells as well.

The latest application in cosmetics products, however, is nanotechnology – only one billionth of a metre in size and changing the world as we know

it. How does this work? Biology and beauty come together by manipulating matter and helping to transfer the clinically proven ingredients past the skin's barrier, an organ designed to protect what's beneath it by keeping in what's essential to the functioning of the body, such as moisture, and keeping what's harmful, such as chemicals and sunlight, out.

SKIN DEEP

Dr Erich Schulte, an acclaimed plastic surgeon and founder of !QMSMedicosmetics, had the skin's almost impenetrable barrier to contend with when he was trying to find a way to get collagen through

SO, WHAT'S THE HEALTHIER CHOICE?

Creams and cosmeceuticals are your best option because they work to replenish or repair what has been lost or damaged in your skin. They often work by mimicking the skin's own ingredients or functions, but these products aren't always the most cost-effective in the long term. With some of the best anti-ageing serums and creams costing well into the hundreds and thousands of rands – and needing to be replenished every few months – it's easy to see why some could be swayed to opt for a once-off procedure that gets the job done almost instantly. For many, however, the idea of going under the knife is not a pleasant one, and the potential complications and risks are simply too much to fathom. A healthier solution? Invest in your appearance in the longer term. It's the same old story: diet, exercise, a good night's sleep, shielding your face from the sun and a comprehensive range of products that will gradually protect and rejuvenate your skin is a game plan that really works.

Protein fix

'Collagen makes up 65% of our skin and is its most important protein. This is why gravity slowly starts taking its toll after the age of 25, when your ability to produce these miracle workers begins to decrease.' – Dr Erich Schulte

the skin's epidermis. It was during his time at the University Medical Center Göttingen in Germany treating burn victims that he started researching the significance of collagen in wound healing. He knew if he could find a way to reintroduce it into the skin, the skin could be regenerated and scar formation reduced – a process, he concluded, that could be applied for aesthetic purposes too.

So if it's so simple, where's the rub? 'Collagen molecules are three times too big to penetrate the barrier of your skin,' says Dr Schulte. 'The cream is on top, not inside where it should be – the reason that collagen creams have, at best, been labelled ineffective.' Dr Schulte realised the need to get the collagen past the epidermis and so went on to create 'micellised' molecules, which are made by unravelling the strands of a collagen molecule. Once these are through the epidermis, they reunite as collagen and start working on the skin from the inside. The result? Plumper skin that looks, feels and really is more youthful.

THE PRICE OF YOUTH

Despite the recession, the anti-ageing business and luxury goods market appear not to have even skipped a beat, proving the 'lipstick index' holds true. In economic downturns, evident as long ago as the Great Depression in the 1930s, cosmetics sales go up rather than go down. It seems women are more likely to give up eating out, buying pretty dresses and taking holidays than forgo their beauty routines – and some argue that tough economic times are even a drive for such sales. 'Women have an increased desire to purchase these products in response to recession cues,' said Sarah E Hill, an associate professor of social psychology at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, in an interview with *The Huffington Post*. 'Even though everyone is tightening their purse strings, women are wanting to splurge on things that can make them feel more attractive.' When times are tough, we want to feel young, healthy and beautiful; we want to appear to be invincible. ■



BEST FACE FORWARD

- Slow down ageing with a targeted anti-ageing treatment:
- **Nimue Rejuvenating Facial** (R425 for 60 minutes), Skin Renewal Hillcrest, Durban. 031 767 0564, www.skinrenewal.co.za
 - **!QSMedicosmetics Classic Treatment** (R750 for 90 minutes), Constantia Uitsig Spa. 021 794 0433, www.constantia-uitsig.com
 - **SkinCeuticals Peel** (from R550 for 30 minutes), Laserderm, Dunkeld West. 011 341 0580, www.laserderm-sa.com

AGEING IS A DISEASE
– A TERMINAL DISEASE

