

## Why is My Skin Suddenly Sensitive?

You don't think you've done anything to change your routine, but you've noticed that your skin seems angry and sensitive...what could be making it so irritable?

Despite what the marketing men try to tell us, 'sensitive' isn't always a skin type, it's a very common condition that affects most of us at some point. It doesn't matter whether your skin is dry, oily or combination, it can still be affected by sensitivity and sometimes there doesn't appear to be any apparent reason for it. So what are the factors that can trigger sensitivity, and cause the niggling redness, prickling and stinging sensations?

### The Time of Year

Are you pollen sensitive? If so it can affect more than just your nose and eyes, with varying seasonal pollen levels really affecting some people's skin sensitivity too. Add to that the changes in temperature and humidity and sometimes your skin can struggle to cope. If this sounds like you, try to stay indoors on days when the pollen count is high, and protect your skin with a good quality moisturiser all year round.

During the cold winter months, keep your skin extra hydrated – invest in a humidifier to help. In summer time, it goes without saying that you need extra sun screen, while sun protection should be a year-long concern.

## **The Time of Day**

Have you noticed that your skin often feels itchier and more sensitive at night? That's because your body runs on a biologically programmed 24-hour (circadian) rhythm, and during the night your cortisol levels naturally drop while histamine levels can surge. This results in less anti-inflammatory hormone and more itching which can keep the best of us awake at night. You can reduce the effects of these hormonal changes by sleeping in breathable fabrics, changing your bedding regularly and avoiding getting too hot in bed.

## **Your Time of Life**

Different stages in our life can cause changes in skin that affect its sensitivity.

- Young and teenage skin is prone to hormonal changes and sometimes it can drive younger women to using harsh skincare

products if they are acne-prone. Unfortunately this can make skin more sensitive as it strips away the natural protective oils.

- Hormonal upheavals like pregnancy, monthly cycles and menopause can all have a knock on effect on your skin's sebum secretion, which affects its natural function. At the same time, hormonal changes can cause redness, making skin feel really sensitive to the touch.
- As we get older, our skin tends to thin, while the sebaceous gland activity drops. This can weaken your skin's defences, and leave it dehydrated. Although there's not much we can do to avoid most of these changes, we can use good quality and age-appropriate products to make sure we're caring properly for our skin at all stages.

## **Your Lifestyle**

Lifestyle plays a big part in skin health. If you're guilty of having more than a few late nights, not getting enough sleep or you're stressed, it can translate to sensitive skin. The food we eat and the amount of water we take in can also soothe or irritate. Give your skin the best possible support by looking after your overall health.

## **Using the Wrong Skincare Products for Your Skin**

Skin can be fragile – with a delicate barrier and excitable nerve endings, you can overdo the products even if they are expensive, and good quality. If you're prone to sensitivity, the rule of thumb should be to use as few products as possible, containing as few ingredients. Look for something that's dermatologically tested and free from alcohol, lanolin, fragrances and colourants.