

Skin care for swimming season

As the temperatures start to rise, our thoughts turn to vacations, and the idea of a long cold swim. As any professional or recreational swimmer will tell you, swimming is great for your body but can wreak havoc on your skin, so if you intend to get in the pool this summer season, you'll need to take some skincare precautions first.

A beach holiday can cause your skin some serious trauma if you don't prep first. Even being a regular visitor to the hotel pool can dry out your skin – you know that weird chemical smell you get on your skin after a dip in a swimming pool? Imagine what it's doing to your skin if it smells that bad?

It's not just the salt, chlorine and other chemicals that can mess with your skin's comfort zone. Sitting around in the sunshine getting a tan (please don't – the shade is so much better for you), won't help your skin's condition, not using enough sun screen with a high enough SPF, forgetting to reapply sunscreen after a swim and letting skin get too dry in the heat can all cause skin acne stress.

If your skin is dry and itchy, it's probably down to chemicals in the pool. They have to be there to kill bugs but in some countries, they can be a

little over-zealous and the result is itchy, dry skin that doesn't look great uncovered for your Instagram pool shots. Even ozone pools can irritate some people's skin so just be aware before you take a dip. Sea water can be harsh on your skin too; although in some places the mineral content is beneficial and can soothe skin conditions, salt water can be an irritant.

Keep yourself hydrated – if your skin is thirsty it's more prone to chlorine and other damage. Chlorine breaks down your skin's natural defences to other irritants too, so make sure that you drink plenty of water to help skin resist chlorine's effects. Staying hydrated also prevents sun stroke and general dehydration which can creep up on you quickly in a hot climate. Always carry a bottle of water with you and sip from it regularly – your skin will thank you and you don't always realise how much extra water you'll need.

Always shower after you've been in the water – don't just get straight onto the sun loungers. This washes off any salt, chlorine or other nasties that might have been in the water, and gives you a better base on which to apply your moisturizing sun screen.

It's more effective to use a normal sun screen and reapply it after you've been swimming than rely on waterproof. If you wash the

chlorine off in the shower after your swim, you'll be taking some of the waterproof sun screen with you and you never really know how much will be left. Opt for a decent SPF (50 if the sun is strong) and keep slapping it on.

Wash your swim wear thoroughly after you've been in the water – this prevents rashes and irritation under your costume or bikini.

When you're indoors again, apply a good moisturizing body lotion all over to replenish the moisture you've lost through sun, sea and chlorine.