

Pollution: How it affects our skin

[With pollution levels described by the government as 'very high' or 'high' this week in eight regions across the UK](#), we chat to **Dr Anjali Mahto, Consultant Dermatologist & British Skin Foundation Spokesperson** to see what measures you can take at home to protect your skin.



Dr Mahto explains, *“As skin is your outermost barrier, it is one of the first and largest targets for air pollution. So, what exactly is air pollution? Air pollutants include the polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), volatile organic compounds (VOC), oxides, particulate matter, ozone, and cigarette smoke. Prolonged and repetitive exposure to these agents can have negative effects on the skin.*

*Scientific studies in both animals and humans have shown that these components of **air pollution can contribute to premature skin ageing (wrinkling, pigmentation spots) and worsening of inflammatory skin diseases** such as eczema, psoriasis and acne. One major mechanism is via the generation of reactive oxygen species that can damage DNA in skin cells.”*

So short of leaving the city and moving into the countryside, what can you do to limit damage? Dr Mahto recommends the following...

1. **Cleanse your skin every night to remove dirt and environmental toxins from the skin surface**
2. **Exfoliate once weekly (less if you have dry or sensitive skin) to give your skin a deeper clean. This will also improve the penetration of any products that are later applied to the skin.**
3. **Use an antioxidant serum – antioxidants such as vitamin C and resveratrol have the ability to neutralize damage caused by reactive oxygen species. They certainly have a role in your anti-ageing armory.**
4. **Use a regular sunscreen (SPF 15 or above) – don't forget your skin also needs UV protection to help reduce risk of skin cancers and signs of premature ageing.**
5. **Moisturise daily, particularly if you have a tendency to dry, inflammatory skin conditions e.g. eczema and psoriasis. This will keep your skin hydrated helping to maintain the integrity of the barrier function of your skin.**

“For many of us settled in city life, it is worth thinking about taking extra precautionary measures to protect against noxious chemicals we are exposed to on a daily basis. We may not be able to control the environmental factors that lead to skin inflammation and ageing, but it is in our hands to try and limit these.” **Dr Anjali Mahto.**

About the BSF

The **British Skin Foundation** is the only UK charity dedicated to raising funds for skin disease and skin cancer research. Our unwavering commitment to funding quality research means we won't stop until we've found cures for common skin problems like eczema and acne through to potential killers like malignant melanoma. To date we've raised £15 million to fund research projects since 1996.

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