

DEFYING GRAVITY

The pull of the earth is causing us to age faster than, let's be honest, a lot of us would like. With an anti-ageing enemy that formidable, we're calling in the big guns...

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*All fur coat
and no knickers*

Type 'Michael Haussman' and 'gravity' into YouTube and you'll see a video installation of a naked woman jumping in slow motion on a trampoline.

Interestingly, what's shocking isn't her nudity. As she surges upwards, her face is beautiful and youthful – her lines fade and her chin is lifted. But when she hurtles downwards it's a whole different story. Her cheeks look hollow, her skin sags and her entire face is pulled south. In those fleeting few seconds she ages 30 entire years.

It's a dramatic scene, but one which shows the mighty aesthetic force of gravity. All the earth wants to do it seems is drag our faces, and bodies, downwards. It appears to happen overnight – one moment everything's peachy, the next, faint lines creep across your face like withering ivy. "One of the first signs of facial sagging is a very slight downturn at the mouth," says consultant dermatologist Dr Nick Lowe. "There's also a small – often just half a centimetre – drop in the chin area, due to the breakdown of collagen." These little signs cause us to look and feel older than we truly are, and they're the reason why the entire skincare industry is now directing its attention towards lifting, firming and elevating miracle products.

The question is, why didn't this happen sooner? We lose 1% of our collagen every year after the age of 20, but we're often so blindsided by wrinkles we don't see it. And experts now agree gravity is the main culprit. As *WH* went to press, fat transfer had replaced liposuction as the seventh most popular cosmetic surgery procedure in the UK. Brow lifts have increased by 17%, while eyelid surgery has risen by 13% to become the second most popular procedure for women, at more than 6,000 ops in 2012. We want fuller faces – that stay that way.

HARMFUL HABITS

Your face is made up of hundreds of elastin fibres – like rubber bands that are stretched and recoiled as your muscles move. The result: they weaken with time. This elasticity decreases progressively between the ages of 25 and 50 and deteriorates even more dramatically after that. However, sun damage and smoking can radically increase the rate of this sagging by restricting oxygen flow

to the skin by as much as 30%, causing the breakdown of collagen. Besides these external factors, there's our genetics. "Asian and olive skintones are more likely to suffer weakened collagen and sagging," says Dr Lowe. "They don't have as much protection against UVA as very dark skins. And because they're not as light as Caucasian skins, they can, to generalise, be a little lax when it comes to applying a daily SPF." Because darker skins are more prone to vitamin D deficiency due to higher melanin levels inhibiting effective production, supplementing is key. Traditional sun protection creams were thick and chalky, but the newest breed of high-power SPFs, such as Germaine de Capuccini Urban Shield SPF50, are lightweight and don't leave a white film on darker skin.

As if you needed extra incentive to ditch the toxic sticks, we have two words for you: Dot Cotton. To combat smoking-related lines, especially around the mouth, using an SPF with UVA as well as UVB protection such as Eucerin AQUAporin Active Moisturising Cream, £13, is key. But your skincare regime also needs a hit of potent antioxidants – they're key to stabilising free radical damage, which accelerates the breakdown of collagen. Lancôme Rénergie French Lift contains the antioxidant resveratrol, plus a built-in massaging tool for twice the collagen production boost.

RUNNING CLUB

Five million Brits run, but it isn't just our knees and hips feeling the effects. That dreaded, hollow-looking 'runner's face' led US plastic surgeon Dr Gerald Imber to declare the sport the biggest cause of premature ageing after smoking and sunbathing. He believes pounding up and down when you jog drags facial skin away from the underlying muscles. "Runners can have haggard, sunken faces due to loss of subcutaneous fat," he says. Celebrity facialist Debbie Thomas has this vital tip, though: "When you wash your face after a run, massage the skin upwards to encourage the circulation to flow that way. The same advice applies to face cream, too – so many people pull downwards instinctively." The

bottom line isn't to stop running – we'd never suggest that – it's to bolster your skincare regime with targeted ingredients. Copper is an essential element here, because it stimulates the remodeling of elastin and improves barrier function, keeping the bad guys out (that's you, free radicals). We rate Kiehl's Powerful Wrinkle Reducing Cream, £42, highly.

You need to mix up your workouts, too. "Interchange cardio sessions with



weights and strength exercises to take the stress from your face," says Anwar Gilbert, fitness manager at London gym The Third Space. "And something like Spinning is still cardio but doesn't involve the same up and down movement as running."

THE YO-YO EFFECT

Excessive fluctuations in weight can weaken elastin fibres (stretch marks are your skin's way of saying it can't bounce back any more), so beware dropping pounds *too* fast on very restrictive diets. And approach fat with caution. "Eating too much animal fat can result in an increase in free radicals, leading to premature cell death and sagging skin," says New York aesthetic dermatologist Dr Lisa Airan. Your beauty arsenal *must* include hyaluronic acid – a natural skin component that helps to maintain strength and elasticity. It can absorb 1,000 times its own weight in water, making it a lifeline for skin in need of plumping. Origins Plantscription Powerful Lifting Cream uses plant-derived nutrients for extra lifting power, so is ideal while you're slimming down.

FEED YOUR SKIN

Sugar is your skin's nemesis. It speeds up the breakdown of collagen, and US dermatologist Dr Fredric Brandt warns too much can add 10 years to your face. "Sugar causes glycolisation, a process that hastens the degradation of elastin and collagen. It actively ages you," he says. Research has proven this effect, terrifyingly. Scientists from Leiden University Medical Centre in the Netherlands reported that of 600 study participants, those with high blood sugar looked older than people with lower readings. In fact, for every 1mm extra sugar per litre of blood, the perceived age of the person rose by a shocking five months.

Nutritionist Vicki Edgson agrees about the dangers of a sweet tooth. "Sugar binds with proteins that would ordinarily create collagen and elastin, inhibiting them from plumping our skin properly," she says. "Watch out for hidden sources in things like balsamic vinegar, which is about 47% sugar." A

study published in *The British Journal of Dermatology* found the ageing effects of sugar typically kick in around 35 and spiral rapidly after that, so avoid foods that list sugar in the top three ingredients, and invest in peptide-based skincare. As collagen destructs, its protein chains break down into peptides. In turn, these send out signals to produce more collagen. A product you leave on overnight is ideal as it has longer to work its magic. Crème De La Mer The Lifting And Firming Mask is eight hours' rest in a pot, while Murad Rapid Collagen Infusion, £78, is your must-have day serum to resist the gravitational pull.

AS TIME GOES BY

Unless you're living a life of debauched excess (oh hi, Kate Moss), your twenties and thirties are safe, but there's a key age to really up your skin's anti-gravity regime. "There are 15 fat pads on each side of the face," explains Dr Ravi Jain, aesthetic physician and medical director at Riverbanks Clinic. "Around the ages 40 to 43, we start to see a decrease in the



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number of plumper fat pads." The first place you'll notice this? Not your jowls or cheeks, but the middle of your forehead between the eyebrows. "So many people think the vertical line between your brows is a wrinkle, but it appears because the fat pad in that area has collapsed," Dr Jain says. Don't fuel your worry lines – there is hope. "Retin-A [a form of retinol] is key to speeding up the renewal of collagen and elastin," says Dr Lowe. You should be looking for 0.2% retinol, alongside a plumping agent such as hyaluronic acid – both of which you'll find in Vichy Liftactiv Advanced Filler. It's the go-to product for immediate plumping effects, especially on that first sign of gravity across your forehead. Massage the product gently into your most affected areas using circular movements no bigger than a 5p piece, to really encourage the potent ingredients to sink in.

Sure, what goes up, must go down, but by honing your exercise routine, negating your vices and investing in the right skincare, your gravitational tendencies should stay pointing – firmly – skywards. **WH**

UNDERSTAND YOUR AGEING

FOREHEAD BEGINS TO WRINKLE, OFTEN DUE TO DEHYDRATION – DRINK UP

GLABELLAR REGION IS THE FIRST PLACE TO LOSE VOLUME. IT CAN LOOK LIKE A VERTICAL LINE OR HORIZONTAL CREASES

TEMPLE AREA DROOPS NATURALLY. SAD FACE

CROWS' FEET FORM. THEY'RE CUTE THOUGH

SKIN ALONG THE TEAR TROUGH SHRINKS AND EYE BAGS BECOME MORE PROMINENT

SLIGHT HOLLOWING UNDER THE EYES DUE TO FAT LOSS

NASOLABIAL FOLD LINES FIRST APPEAR (BUT DON'T STOP SMILING, THAT WOULD BE BAD)

PERIORAL LINES APPEAR AROUND THE MOUTH DUE TO LOSS OF COLLAGEN. THIS IS EXACERBATED BY SMOKING

LOSS OF DEFINITION IN CHIN SETS IN. DAMN YOU, GRAVITY

MARIONETTE LINES (OR SAD LINES) DEEPEN DUE TO FAT AND TISSUE LOSS

30s

40s

50s

PHOTOGRAPHY: TRUNKARCHIVE.COM, ILLUSTRATIONS: LIZZY THOMAS.COM, THE MIND-BEAUTY CONNECTION: 9 DAYS TO LESS STRESS, GORGEOUS SKIN AND A WHOLE NEW YOU BY AMY WECHSLER, AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.CO.UK