

A Primer on Men's Skin Care

Written by Berry McWhorter
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Let's face it (no pun intended): men take horrible care of their complexion. Our mug is the first thing that people see. It is their first impression of us. It is an outward reflection of who we are and what we want to be. So why is it our female counterparts spend so much time on their face? Why do the women in our lives spend hundreds of dollars a year in cosmetics? What's with all of the soaps and creams and sticks and tubes and bottles and...stuff? It's because they get it.



Women understand how important it is to put your best foot forward and present yourself in the best light that you can. They understand that good product facilitates a feeling of satisfaction, a feeling of confidence. That is ultimately what has led so many of us to convert over to wet shaving. Men want to feel satisfied and confident, too! We love the way we feel after a hot, close, rewarding shave. But so many of us are doing it with one hand tied behind our back. We are spending so much time managing only 2/3 of our face that we manage to neglect the rest in the process. What is a stellar shave if we have dry skin across our forehead? What is that baby's butt-smooth feeling if the bags under our eyes make us look like Rip Van Winkle?

Wet shavers should embrace the importance of men's skin care! We need to spend more time on caring for our whole face! Our cheeks, chins, and necks are doing well, but our noses, eyes, and foreheads are longing for some attention. We need to take a cue from those women in our lives, and open ourselves up to the idea incorporating those soaps and creams and such into our own routines.

Men's skin care these days ain't exactly your mama's drug store brands. It's a market and an ever-expanding industry unto itself. Companies like Jack Black, Anthony Logistics, and Lab Series make products exclusively for the male demographic, while new companies and product lines continue to appear year after year. Anthony even goes so far as to donate some of the proceeds from their sales to fighting prostate cancer! You don't get much more of a manlier brand than that, gents.

Proper care and daily maintenance of your skin is one of the best gifts you can give yourself, as well as the best way to prepare your skin for a shave . -- Eric Malka, co-founder of The Art of Shaving

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To give a brief overview of what “proper care and daily maintenance” entails, men’s skin care can essentially be broken up into two categories: cleansing and moisturizing. Cleansing tends to be the most overlooked aspect of the skin care regimen. On the other hand, men often get adequate moisturization if they use a good aftershave, but even then, many men fail to put it on any other part of their face other than the shave terrain. These two aspects of our daily routine are crucial for the long-term health of our skin, and can significantly enhance our wet shaving experience.

Many of the various companies and brands that make cosmetic products (both men’s and women’s) recommend that a cleansing and moisturizing routine be followed twice a day, usually in the morning and before bed. Cleansing will strip the skin of excess oil, pollutants, and bacteria, while moisturizing will replace lost moisture with special hydrating, nourishing lotions and protect the skin from environmental damage.

Oil is an interesting skin element. It is simultaneously an ally, and yet our skin’s worst enemy. It is necessary for the skin’s health, acting as a hydrating layer. But oil often fights with our skin by clogging pores, leading to blackheads and pimples. Oil also allows dirt, germs and other impurities to stick to our face. The twice-daily frequency is recommended to balance out the level of oil on the skin, keep dirt and bacteria in check, and help prevent acne blemishes. Wash any less often and your skin may become too dirty, which can cause the skin to look dull, germs to cause breakouts, and create a look of premature aging. Any more often and you will likely dry out your skin, virtually stripping your face of the thin, vital layer of oil needed for optimal skin health. The dryness will make your skin attempt to compensate, sending your oil glands into overdrive. People with oily skin often fall into this vicious cycle. They cleanse more often in an attempt remove the excess oil, not realizing that what they are doing is actually making the situation worse. Stick with washing twice daily.



Not just any old soap or lotion should be used for a routine. In fact, most bath soaps and body lotions should be avoided on the face at all costs. The skin there is thinner and more delicate than on any other part of your body. The products you use on your face should be addressed specifically for that area. Body products are usually made to work a bit stronger to deal with its thicker skin, so using, say, a bar soap as a face wash could dry out your face. Body lotion is often oil-based, so using it as a facial moisturizer may lead to oily skin and breakouts. Instead, non-soap facial cleansers and oil-free facial moisturizers should be used. These will strike just the right balance of cleansing to hydration, and not make the skin compensate for any one issue.

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So how does all of this work into wet shaving? Having a well-maintained face in general [boosts a man's confidence](#)

. A good shave is definitely one part of this, and a skin care routine should be the other. A skin care routine not only covers the skin of the face neglected by wet shaving, but also enhances the shave itself. If we cleanse before a shave, the blade has less in its way. It's not having to cut hair and dirt. A cleanse will remove any debris, prep the beard area with hot water, and soften the hair. Moisturizing will hydrate the skin, replace lost moisture, protect the skin, repair damage, increase suppleness, and even reduce the appearance of sun damage and aging. Good moisturization can even soften the hair, making your next shave that much easier and irritation-free. Skin care compliments a shave routine. Skin care compliments a good complexion. Skin care compliments a man!

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