

# Easy Skin Care Tips for Guys

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## Warm Water in the Shower Works Best

When it comes to getting ready, men have it easy compared to women. Most guys spend 10 or 15 minutes on their morning routine, while many women spend an hour or more applying makeup, practicing good skin care, and getting their hair just right. Men may resist adding steps to their daily routine, but there are several quick skin care tips to give your appearance a major boost.

Many of us like to jump in a hot shower and stay there for a long while, especially when it's cold out. That may be harmful to your skin (also known as your dermis). Bathing in hot water for long periods dries you out, and dry skin is itchy, scaly, and flaky. That's because hot water strips away your natural oils. For better skin health, keep the water warm, not hot. If you insist on a hot shower, keep it under five minutes.



## Start Using Moisturizer

If you haven't already, start using moisturizer every time you wash your face. Why? Moisturizer traps water close to your dermis, giving you that 'glowing skin' treatment. The extra moisture reduces the wrinkles, too. It eases the effects of dry skin, and can make chapped, patchy, flaky skin look and feel better.

The right moisturizer can also help with inflammatory skin problems such as eczema.

Moisturizing creams are a middle ground between oily ointments like petroleum jelly and watery lotions. Creams work great as moisturizers, but their stabilizers can cause allergic reactions, so it's best to test them first. If you're trying a new cream, first test a small amount about the size of a pea on your inner wrist or elbow. Leave it alone and don't wash that area for a day or two, and pay attention if you start to feel pain or itching or notice a rash or any redness.

While moisturizing your face is essential, it doesn't hurt to apply moisturizer across your whole body after a warm shower, which can help prevent dryness, itching, and flaking.



## Trade Soap for Cleanser

You may think anything that lathers and cleans is soap. But that's not the case. True soap is made out of fats, oils, or fatty acids. Cleansers on the other hand are made partially or entirely of synthetic materials. And dermatologists tend to agree on this tip: for a healthier dermis, cleansers are better than soap.

What difference does it make? Soaps do a great job of getting you clean, and they are better at removing oils and dirt. Seems like a good thing, right? Unfortunately, soaps do their job a little too well, removing so much oil that your dermis is deprived of its natural moisture barrier. That leaves your skin dry and can lead to flaking, scaling, and itching. And if you are especially sensitive, soap can aggravate things even more.

Cleanser is milder. You may have to be a little more patient if you have oily skin, but cleanser will leave you in better shape overall. It also doesn't leave soap scum on your skin as soap can. And here's a nice bonus—that soap scum won't appear on your sink or tub either, making cleaning a breeze. Go easy on the scrubbing, though, whether you're using soap or cleanser—too much scrubbing can dry out your epidermal layer either way.



## Soften Your Stubble

When you're finished with your morning shave, you don't want a lot of irritated red bumps staring back from your mirror. Razor bumps are caused by irritated hair follicles, and irritation is worse if your stubble isn't nice and soft before you shave.

So how do you soften stubble? One easy trick is to shave in the shower or right after you step out. The warm water makes your stubble more pliable and easier for your razor to cut through. Plus, damp skin is easier to trim.

Shaving cream lubricates your shave, allowing less friction between your blade and your face. That cuts down on razor burn. Add a mild, moisturizing shaving cream to your routine for even better results. Avoid products with skin-drying alcohol, and look for oils, glycerin, sorbitol, and urea on the ingredient list.



## How Many Blades Do You Need?

It seems like the number of blades offered on disposable razors increases every year. At least one manufacturer touts a seven-blade stubble slicer. Is it necessary? Probably not, according to dermatologists.

Just like abrasive soaps, multi-blade razors may be guilty of working a little too well. They shave close—sometimes too close, leaving behind burns, bumps, and ingrown hairs.

To avoid all that, here are some tips. Stick with one or two blades. Avoid pulling your skin taut. Shave with the grain of your hair rather than against. And once your disposable blade has served its purpose five to seven times, toss it.



## Aftershave Is Unnecessary

Aftershave was invented in the days when straight razors were the only choice available for shaving. Straight razors cause nicks, leaving you vulnerable to germs and infection. So aftershave with an alcohol base was used to help prevent infection. Since straight razors are far less common today, aftershave has outlived its usefulness. There are aftershaves available without an alcohol base that can moisturize your skin, so if you want to carry on the practice, choose one of these. Another alternative is to simply use moisturizer after a shave.



## Pat Your Face Down—Don't Rub

How much time do you spend thinking about how to dry your face? Probably not much, but here's a tip. When it's time to dry, try patting your towel rather than rubbing. Rubbing leaves you irritated and dried out, and patting can fix this.





## Always Check the Label First

The next time you're out shopping, be aware that there are certain words that go beyond mere marketing boasts. Some words signal whether a product is a good buy or best left on the shelf. And you will want to know what common ingredients are best to avoid, and which you should insist on. So here are some label reading tips.

One word to keep an eye out for is "noncomedogenic." What a mouthful! Here's what it means: A comedo is a blackhead or whitehead, so a noncomedogenic formula does not encourage acne. Also look for the phrase "alcohol-free," which indicates the product won't dry you out.

You may want to avoid oxybenzone, which is a common sunscreen ingredient that is naturally found in flower pigment. Oxybenzone is a popular sunscreen choice because it protects against UV radiation. However it also seeps into the dermis and spreads through the body easily. One study found that 97% of those studied had the chemical in their urine. And it's been shown to encourage the growth of tumors at high doses in laboratory rats. Whether or not low doses cause harm to humans is undetermined, and it is approved for use by the FDA.



## Scents Don't Make Sense

When you develop an allergic reaction to a skincare product, one of the most common culprits is fragrance. Fragrances can contain a tremendous variety of chemicals, and it only takes an allergic reaction to one of these to cause your skin to react with itching, redness, burning, stinging, blisters, and even difficulty breathing if your throat swells. This skin reaction is known as contact dermatitis.

Fragrance is such a common problem that the American Contact Dermatitis Society named it Allergen of the Year in 2007. The list of potential allergens in fragrances is too long to list here, but suffice to say that you should pick scent-free shaving creams, soaps, shampoos, and sunscreens when you have the choice, particularly if you have sensitive skin. So for better skin care, skip the scents.



## Fine Line and Wrinkle Removers

When you squint, are you starting to see little lines in the outside corners of your eyes? Those are crow's feet, and they're a common sign of aging. If you'd like to remove them you have a couple of useful options for better skin care.

The first is retinol, also known as vitamin A. Retinoids are famous for inducing cell growth, and they work on the dermis by turning over skin cells faster than normal, which helps bring younger, newer skin cells to the surface. They can help remove wrinkles over time, but this process can also irritate. A commonly available form of this chemical is tretinoin. Be careful—these chemicals can leave you vulnerable to sun damage, so be sure to use at night or protect your skin during the day after use.

Glycolic acid is another effective option. Glycolic acid also encourages cell generation, bringing younger skin to the surface faster. Glycolic acid is also used to remove dark skin spots (hyperpigmentation).



## Shun the Sun

The best way to prevent early signs of aging is to protect yourself from sunlight. Sunlight ages your skin more rapidly, causing wrinkles and worse. Its UV rays penetrate the epidermis, getting down to the deeper dermal layers to cause more damage. To avoid the sun, here are some skin care tips:

- Always use sunscreen that is rated SPF 30 or higher.
- Your potential for sunburn peaks between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., especially near the summer solstice. You are much more likely to burn on days near the summer solstice—even cool, cloudy days—than you are closer to the winter solstice—even warm days.
- Up to 80% of UV light can penetrate clouds, so sunscreen is still important on a cloudy day.
- Many people think the best way to cool off is to shed clothing, but that's not necessarily true. You can actually stay cooler if you wear wide-brimmed hats and cover up with loose, natural fabrics. More clothing means more protection from UV light.
- Clothing may not be enough, however. Sunlight can penetrate fabrics. A thin t-shirt offers little protection against sun exposure, so even if you're clothed, sunscreen beneath your clothing is smart.



## Solutions for Thick Soles and Cracked Feet

Have you noticed that as you age your skin tends to crack? The soles of your feet may thicken as well. If your feet are making you feel self-conscious, it's nice to know the solution is inexpensive.

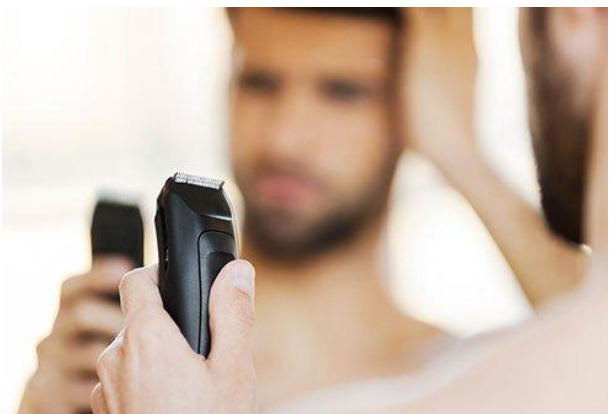
The next time you're in a drug store, pick up a pumice stone. This cheap, rough stone can sluff off extra skin if you use it in the shower across the soles of your feet. After the shower, put an intense moisturizer on your feet, such as a thick cream or ointment. Petroleum jelly should work. If the situation is really bad, spread on the moisturizer before bed, then follow up with socks to trap it close to your skin.



## Shaving 'Down There?' Use Care

Manscaping calls for nicely trimmed body hair everywhere—and we mean everywhere. If you're trimming down below, though, be extra careful. According to one study, 83% of all ER trips for genital injuries are from shaving, and 40% of those patients were men. For better grooming, rather than a full shave, consider a trim with electric clippers using guards. Those guards aren't foolproof—be careful of the angle you use to avoid any unwanted nicks—which should be any and all nicks, frankly.

Going with a clean shave can lead to ingrown hairs—or worse. But if you do decide to go completely bald, first use a mild exfoliant in the shower to slough off any dead skin cells. Then use lots of shaving gel to avoid irritation. You may also want to consider waxing, which lasts longer and leaves stubble softer.





## Keep an Eye Out for Unusual Spots

Perhaps the most important bit of skin care advice is to watch out for unusual spots, which can be a sign of skin cancer. The easiest way to remember is by following your ABCs:

- **A – Asymmetry:** If you divided the spot down the middle, would one side look identical to the other? If not, it could be cancer.
- **B – Borders:** Do you see notched or scalloped edges around the spot? Does the color “bleed” into the rest of the skin? That’s a sign of skin cancer.
- **C – Color:** Is it various colors? A single skin cancer spot can be multiple colors, including red, white, blue, black, and brown. Benign spots are usually all one color, and usually brown.
- **D – Diameter:** Is it bigger than a pea? Spots that are larger than this are more likely to be cancerous.
- **E – Evolving:** Is the spot changing in any way? Has it become itchy or has it started bleeding? Has it moved, changed size or shape, or has it crusted over? These are all bad signs.



If you do notice anything unusual on your skin, especially something that meets one of the above criteria, make sure you see a dermatologist right away.

## Skip the Sugary Treats

If you eat lots of sweet treats, you could be showing it in ways you never realized. Beyond the trouble of keeping a trim waistline, sugar has an often unrecognized effect on your skin.

Glucose and fructose have an unpleasant side effect when they meet collagen—the principle protein of your skin. They can cause collagen fibers to link together, making it more difficult for the collagen to repair itself. This process is called glycation, and the end-products of glycation are called AGEs. AGEs are always developing in your skin and elsewhere in your body, but they appear more frequently where you are exposed to sun, when your diet includes excess sweets and fried foods, and when you smoke. This is how younger people can have older-looking skin, depending on their lifestyle choices.



We’ve known about AGEs since the 1970s, but it wasn’t until the late 1990s that scientists discovered that by eating foods with high-AGE content, we can harm ourselves. Candy and other desserts have more AGEs than most foods. Some of the foods with the highest AGE content include Big Macs and Chicken McNuggets, broiled hot dogs, pan-fried steaks, and fried bacon. Topping the list is roasted BBQ chicken thigh skin.

Cooking method matters. Boiled chicken is safer than baked, for instance. But the most important distinction is plants vs. animals. A McDonald’s hamburger has more than 4,800 AGE units per serving. A veggie burger has a mere 20.

## Wear Soft Fabrics Near Your Skin

If you have dry, itchy skin, protect it with the clothes you wear. Choose natural fabrics like linen and cotton because these breathe better than synthetics like rayon. Soft fabrics keep your skin in better shape as well. So even if you like to wear wool on the outside, be sure to have something softer on the inside next to your skin.



## Keep Things Humid

Is your skin scaly? Along with moisturizer and soft, breathable fabrics, another useful skin care tip is to try a humidifier. Humidifiers pump moisture into the air, so using one at home can help you fight back against dry skin. If you're worried about fire hazards, be sure to pick a newer model that releases mist into the air while staying cool.



## Quit Smoking

Smoking is hard on your whole body, including your dermis. Smoking cigarettes ages your skin more quickly, leaving it dull and wrinkly. Another harm caused by smoking involves healing. Your skin takes longer to heal from wounds when you smoke. And the list of smoking-related skin harm continues with diseases. Some skin problems worsen with smoking, including psoriasis and hidradenitis suppurativa, which causes boils, cysts, and pimples to develop.



Quitting smoking can be tough, but the sooner you quit the healthier you will be. If you're ready to reap the health benefits, talk to your doctor about effective methods to stop smoking.

## Skip the Tanning Bed

We've covered how damaging sunlight can be to your skin. The same goes for tanning beds, which cause a 75% greater risk of deadly melanoma skin cancer for those who use them before age 35. If you use them occasionally, your odds triple.

Tanning beds are so lousy for your skin that the American Academy of Dermatology Association calls for them to be banned for non-medical use. Not only do they increase your risk for all skin cancers, but most tanning beds only use UVA light, meaning you don't even get the vitamin D benefits of sunlight when you tan indoors.



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