

BRUNCH

WELLNESS

FOREVER FREE

Here's a rundown on common recurring skin and hair ailments, their causes and how you can best rid yourself of them
by Parul Khanna

WE HAVE all suffered from annoying hair and skin ailments - dandruff, acne, blackheads, puffy eyes, dark circles, dry patches of skin and chapped lips - at least once in our lives. When they strike, we do what is necessary to ensure that they disappear as soon as they appear. But some of these ailments recur with irritating regularity.

This is when most of us wish we had permanent, not temporary solutions to such irritants. We tell you about common ailments that recur and how best to get rid of them.

DANDRUFF
Anyone who has had a dandruff problem will agree the condition can be terribly embarrassing. The usual way to deal with dandruff is to buy an anti-dandruff shampoo. But its victims will agree that whether the shampoo works or not, dandruff certainly returns with a vengeance.

Dandruff is a phenomenon that usually occurs because of seasonal change. It normally goes away on its own. But sometimes, certain situations or products trigger dandruff. A major reason is overactive oil glands. Dandruff is also caused by a chemical allergy to hair products like sprays or gels. It can also be caused by stress, fungal infections or by a skin condition called seborrheic dermatitis.

Remedy: "Apply oil in your hair before shampooing it. This softens the flakes stuck on the surface of your scalp. Try using shampoos with anti-fungal properties. But, if the problem persists, consult a doctor," says Dr Anil Kumar Mallik, consultant dermatologist, GM Modi Hospital.

BLACKHEADS/ACNE
After dandruff, blackheads and acne rank as the most embarrassing problems. Blackheads and whiteheads are



LIPS DON'T LIE
To avoid dry lips, apply a thick coat of vaseline/glycerine before going to bed

a form of acne caused by overactive sebaceous (oil) glands present on the face. Blackheads form when a pore on the skin gets blocked with dirt and excessive oil. When the pore is exposed to air, it oxidises and turns black. Otherwise it remains white and is called a whitehead.

Remedy: Prevention is better than cure, says Dr Mallik. Start with checking your skin type. The problem is that many of us are unaware of our skin type and tend to use cosmetic products that don't suit the skin. Thus, people with oily skin use oily moisturisers or oily sunscreens, a sure shot way to block pores on the skin, creating the right conditions for blackheads/whiteheads and acne.

If you develop mild acne, a simple facial cleansing routine can take care of it. "Wash your face with facewash twice a day. If the weather is humid, rinse your face with plain water at least thrice a day," Dr Mallik suggests. But remember, do not keep washing your face with soap as that dries your skin, triggering your oil glands to secrete more oil.

Though the acne problem is restricted to those with oily skin, often people with dry skin also have an acute blackhead problem. That is because they have an oily T-zone (the forehead and nose) but use oily

IF YOU DEVELOP MILD ACNE, A SIMPLE CLEANSING ROUTINE HELPS - IF YOU FOLLOW IT RELIGIOUSLY, THAT IS

PHOTO: AJAY AGGARWAL

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PUFFY EYES:

Puffy eyes can be caused by a kidney problem, alcoholism, allergy or old age, because with age, the elasticity of the skin around the eyes decreases, forming bags in the area. But many young people who show no signs of any of the above mentioned problems also suffer from puffy eyes. "In such cases, one should get a check-up done. It could be because of water retention or a deficiency of micronutrients," suggests Dr Gulshant Panesar.

Remedy: "There is no foolproof way to treat it. We generally prescribe creams with vitamin and sunblock properties. They are effective in doing away with 40 per cent of the puffiness. We sometimes also give minor electrical charges," says Dr Panesar. If puffiness is caused by sleep deprivation, it is temporary and you can get your eyes back to normal the moment you get enough sleep. For a very temporary solution, if you have a party or an interview lined up, a cold compress may help.

creams and moisturisers not only on dry parts of their skin, but all over the face. Says Dr Anil Kumar Mallik, "We recommend creams that have derivatives and modifications of Vitamin A. Benzoyl peroxide is a very effective cream to rid of blackheads. Other medications we prescribe include tretinoin, adapalene and tazarotene."



PEOPLE WITH DEEP SET EYES SEEM TO HAVE PERMANENT DARK CIRCLES SO THERE'S NO POINT TRYING TO GET RID OF THEM

DARK CIRCLES

An international study by cosmetic giant Clinique found that women ranked dark circles as one of the biggest beauty problems they faced. Many of us believe insufficient sleep, excessive partying and alcohol cause dark circles. Our experts say that is a complete myth. "Sometimes, the problem of dark circles is hereditary," says Dr Mukesh Girdhar, dermatologist, Max Healthcare.

He adds that people with deep set eyes seem to have permanent dark circles so there's no point trying to get rid of them. "These cases cannot be treated. So you must first ascertain if you fall into such a category," says Dr Girdhar.

The other causes of dark circles can be explained medically. Doctors say dark under-eye circles in some people are the by-product of the mechanism that produces bruises. A hectic lifestyle has nothing to do with it. "When blood vessels in the area are traumatised because of stress or anger they may leak. Blood then leaks out into the surrounding skin. The body begins up the mopping-up process and you see a dark, purplish or blue-black discolouration. So, dark circles are actually caused by leaky capillaries," says Dr Gulshant Panesar, dermatologist, Moolchand Medcity. She says leaky capillaries are a common phenomenon but show the most under the eyes because the skin

there is thin.

Remedy: There actually isn't a permanent remedy for dark circles, especially if you are pre-disposed to them. And though home remedies like placing slices of cucumber or potato on the eyes help lighten the skin in the area upto 40 per cent, these are temporary solutions. Another option is cosmetic surgery which is expensive and doesn't address the real cause of the problem.

DRY AREAS

How many times have you finished one full bottle of moisturiser in an attempt to soften that stubbornly rough elbow or those eternally dry shins in vain?

There can be many causes of skin dryness. Air-conditioning, the side-effects of some medicines or even sensitivity to the sun are some, so it is necessary to rule out a medical condition before starting treatment, say doctors. "If you suddenly notice your shins getting very dry and swollen, you may be developing a thyroid problem. We also have to rule out the fact that the person is a chronic smoker. If it itches on the dry patch, it could be eczema. If you suddenly notice excessive dryness, get a thorough check-up to rule out a medical problem," says Dr Gulshant Panesar.

Remedy: General dryness of the skin only has one cure - a proper moisturising regimen. There are home remedies too. Media professional Renuka Singh swears by hers. "I apply almond oil on my skin before my bath. This ensures when I have a bath in the winter, the soap doesn't excessively dry my skin. I come out of my bath with soft skin that stays like that through the day."

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