

Mind the GAP

Don't neglect the space from your chin to your chest if you want to keep it looking as fresh as your face, says *Prevention's* beauty editor **Cecily-Anna Bennett**.

Necks are a dead giveaway of one's vintage, considering it's a body part so often neglected (or should that be neck-lected)? A 2018 UK survey discovered that while almost 20 per cent of women believe the neck reaches "crisis point" at 40 (a bit dramatic, perhaps), 97 per cent admitted they didn't use a neck cream targeted to treat neck lines, wrinkles or sagging.

WHY THE NECK AGES SO FAST

"The neck and décolletage region [the skin from our collar to our nipples], as well as the hands, elbows and knees are reliable 'tells' pointing to the life that one has led," says Melbourne dermatologist Dr Adam Sheridan. "The skin is thin and vulnerable, and the relative lack of underlying fat means that any reduction in the quality of the skin [as with ageing] is evident for all to see."

Add to that a lifetime of exposure to damaging environmental elements (wind, UV rays and pollution, to name a few), plus genetic factors, and it's all you can do not to don a high-necked jumper for the rest of your life! If it's an area you're self-conscious about, the good news is that there may still be décolleté-exposing fashion in your future. It all starts with you taking onboard the

idea that looking after your neck and chest are every bit as important as looking after your face. When it comes to skincare, start at your forehead, and work your way down past your chin... way, way down. Your loving daily "facecare" regimen really ought to stop at your boobs.

SOME GOOD NEWS

The beauty market is full of creams, masks and treatments designed to target this oft-neglected area of the body – and many of them can make a positive difference. It's even possible to reverse established damage, Dr Sheridan says. As we age, among the most common concerns are crepey skin, reduced elasticity, visible capillaries and pigmentation. A number of products contain active ingredients that target skin renewal (see overpage).

Meanwhile, dermatologists offer professional treatments, including radiofrequency, ultrasound and laser. "These aim to reinvigorate the skin's natural self-renewal processes and encourage formation of new healthy collagen and skin cells," Dr Sheridan says. The takeaway? It's never too late to start making a difference to your skin. And as for extending your "facecare" way beyond the chin? Trust us – your boobs will thank you for decades to come. ►

'Neck-lected'

One study found that 97 per cent of women don't use a cream to protect their neck and chest from lines, wrinkles and sagging.

What the experts say...

We spoke to some of Australia's leading skin doctors for their top décolleté-improving tips.

1. Redirect your perfume

"When spritzing fragrance, never spray it directly on your chest because perfume is a photo-sensitiser and will work with the sun to create more damage to the skin," says cosmetic physician Dr Phoebe Jones. "And wear zinc-containing sunscreen on your chest every day. Even at work. Blue light from our devices still causes photoageing and pigmentation."

2. Hydrate, day and night

"Use a moisturiser rich in ceramides," advises dental and dermal expert, Dr Giulia D'Anna. "The neck and chest do not have many oil glands so are often dry. Rich moisturisers help keep the skin supple and well-conditioned." Try CeraVe Moisturizing Cream (RRP \$22.99, Chemist Warehouse).

3. Consult a trusted skin specialist

"For someone concerned with crepey skin and sun damage on their décolletage, I'd generally recommend Ulthera to tighten the skin (an ultrasound treatment that encourages new collagen and elastin)

and then Fraxel laser to remove unwanted sun damage," says plastic surgeon and skincare clinic owner, Dr Anh Nguyen. "Maintain the results with a good neck and décolletage cream and try sleeping on your back to avoid creasing in between the bust," he continues.

4. Have a good skincare routine

"At night, I recommend using a vitamin A derivative of some kind, such as retinol, or prescription tretinoin if your skin can handle it," Dr Jones advises. "This will speed up skin cell turnover and stimulate collagen production."

5. Use sunscreen daily

"We often joke at our clinic that there are far more smooth-skinned bottoms on earth than faces, necks and chests – despite the fact we sit on our bottoms daily," Dr Sheridan says. "The reason? Less exposure to UV damage and pollutants. Protect yourself daily. And, of course, engage in a healthy lifestyle all round, as this best equips you to mend damage that may occur over your lifetime."

What's best for general anti-ageing protection?

Products specifically formulated for the neck and chest area can hydrate, smooth and "plump" the skin, minimise the appearance of creasing and reduce pigmentation. For the best results, look for ingredients like antioxidants, retinoids, growth factors and DNA repair agents (enzymes that

"repair" skin damage). Concerned about the cleavage and chest wrinkles that occur when sleeping? Silicone adhesive pads designed to prevent their formation are anecdotally beneficial, despite the lack of clinical studies. Try these for a décolletage you'll be proud of.

1. Strivectin TL Advanced Tightening Face & Neck Cream, RRP \$148, Priceline

Use this cream morning and night to boost volume, increase hydration and restore firmness and elasticity to your face, neck and beyond.

2. Skin Doctors Instant Neck, Chest & Hand Lift, RRP \$49.95, Chemist Warehouse

Glide the cooling rollerball over your neck, chest and the backs of your hands to tighten the skin, smooth wrinkles and improve the appearance of sagging.

3. Wrinkles Schminkles Chest & Décolletage Smoothing Kit, RRP \$42, wrinklelesschinkles.com

Apply this adhesive, reusable silicon pad to smooth your chest, cleavage and décolletage, and inhibit the formation of wrinkles while you sleep.



Décolletage Clinic

Have a skincare concern you want to get off your chest? We've solved four of the main issues for you.

1 To minimise crepeyness

The crepey skin that can appear on your chest is often a result of sun exposure causing fine lines and degradation of elastin, says dermatologist Dr Corinne Maiolo. Prevent future damage by layering an antioxidant underneath your sunscreen. Try Synergie Skin SupremaC+ (\$115, synergieskin.com). At night, apply a product that contains collagen-stimulating ingredients, such as retinol, peptides or growth factors.

Try: Murad Retinol Youth Renewal Night Cream RRP \$125, adorebeauty.com.au).



2 To reduce lines

Many people have lines on their neck naturally but, when we age, new wrinkles appear as collagen depletes. Slather on sunscreen, maintain good posture, keep your smartphone at eye level and use an anti-wrinkle treatment that contains palmitoyl oligopeptide, a blend of fatty acids that encourage collagen production. **Try: Dr. LeWinn's Reversaderm Collagen Accelerator Serum (RRP \$69.95, drlewinns.com.au).**



3 To fade pigmentation

Pigmentation is often a result of long-term sun exposure, but, in a number of cases, it can be a diagnosable medical condition, Dr Maiolo advises. "If there are any new pigmented spots or lumps, these should be checked by a medical practitioner to confirm they are benign changes, and not a skin cancer," she says. "If an underlying medical condition has been ruled out, a number of 'brightening' product lines may be used. These products contain various combinations of active ingredients, including vitamin C, kojic acid, liquorice extract, glycolic acid and azelaic acid."

Try: Le Roche Posay Pigmentclar Serum (RRP \$59.95, Priceline).



4 To smooth sagging

Sagging skin along the jaw, neck and décolletage occurs over time, as collagen and elastin start to break down. "Topical products are of less value for this type of skin ageing," Dr Maiolo says. "Treatment options include radiofrequency devices, ultrasound therapy (which stimulates the growth of new collagen deep within the skin, acting as a non-surgical facelift) and surgical neck lifts. All these have specific advantages and risks and may be costly or time-consuming." Always seek the advice of a trusted dermatologist or skin doctor first. **P**

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