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10875 Main Street ~ Suite 205 • Fairfax, VA 22030 • USA

703-359-6000 FAX: 703-934-5490 EML: mktgsols@mktgsols.com

A Stunning New Winter You!

By: Laura M. Nolan

Winter doesn't have to be all about surviving cold weather until the return of spring and summer. New winter haircolor, hairstyles and fashion trends allow us the luxury of "getting through the winter blues", but you must first ensure that your skin and hair remain healthy through the coldest months of winter. Once you have dedicated some serious TLC to your body, then you are ready for a bold new seasonal fashion statement!

To prepare for and maintain healthy hair and skin during the cold, harsh, winter months, it is essential to follow a few practical beauty guidelines. During warm months, your skin and hair may require less nourishment, whereas the fall and winter months are times to give your body the attention it deserves and care for it from the inside out.

First Steps To Great Skincare: The first essential step to healthy winter living is starting (or continuing) a healthy and nourishing diet. Water is key! As the temperature drops, less moisture can be found in the air. This factor alone causes a significant amount of dehydration, draining our skin and hair of the moisture it needs to stay healthy. It is just as important to keep hydrated in the winter as it is in the summer. This will help both your skin and hair stay healthy and look beautiful.

Believe it or not, your diet is reflected in your hair. Fruits, vegetables and protein are all very important dietary components. Hair and skin thrive on protein to stay well nourished. In fact, hair is primarily composed of proteins, so a shortage of essential proteins in your diet will result in lifeless, brittle hair, which no amount of conditioning can repair! Keeping your diet rich in proteins, fruits and vegetables, with plenty of water, will actually bring out your most beautiful features – all year long.

Dry winter skin can be treated in a variety of ways, from home moisturizing to more intricate spa treatments. You can bring out the natural beauty of your skin all by yourself, if you know what to do. Dry skin is best treated with hydrating cream based moisturizers, which are heavier than those you would use in warmer months. Put on a moisturizer under your makeup and before bed. This will help keep your skin smooth day and night. Moisturizers with Vitamins A, E, and C are also recommended to repair dry and damaged skin.

For cracked or scaly hands and feet, apply moisturizers before bed and then cover with therapeutic gloves or socks, which can be found at most beauty stores. For a budget solution, try using plastic gloves as a substitute. Apply petroleum jelly as a protective layer on top of moisturizer to seal in the moisture for even better results. Allowing moisturizers to soak in over night can make a world of difference!

If you are having trouble creating a flawless look with concealers because of dry skin, try mixing a bit of moisturizer into your cream based makeup, then apply. This will help smooth out makeup over rough spots.

Skincare Treatments: Although a quality moisturizer treatment is an essential part of keeping winter skin healthy, even more important perhaps, is regular exfoliating. This is the best way to remove dead winter skin, which causes not-so-trendy alligator skin. Exfoliation can be done easily either before or in the shower with a number of great products that may be purchased anywhere from your favorite salon, day spa or skincare clinic to your local drug store. Individuals with acne-prone and sensitive skin should avoid physical scrubs and steer toward products that contain chemical exfoliants like salicylic acid, which are anti-inflammatory, but also provide thorough exfoliation. Acneic skin is best treated with beta hydroxy acids, as they contain antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. Those with normal skin can look for products containing alpha hydroxy acids.

Aside from treatments that you can do for yourself at home, there are many options in today's high-tech salon and spa environments. Professional skin treatments range anywhere from traditional nourishing facials or body masks, to newer scrubs, body wraps and more powerful services like microdermabrasion and skin peels. These will slough off dead skin and allow your lower layers of healthy skin to show through. Salon and spa skin treatments are also great for minimizing the signs of aging, such as crow's feet and wrinkles.

Visit with your professional esthetician, salon or spa professional for some personalized advice on which special ingredients may be best for your skin type. Most salons, spas and estheticians will provide a complimentary skincare consultation, before you consider their array of skincare service treatment options.

Eclips Offers Skincare Advice: At Eclips Salon & Day Spa, in McLean, Virginia, one of the most popular winter body treatments is the Herbology Body Polish, which combines aromatic oils, an herbal exfoliant, and a vitamin-enriched moisturizer. “The moisturizer dissolves the granules in the exfoliant, and it acts as a natural alpha hydroxy acid. This service leaves your skin glowing and soft. Our clients love it!” Renita Woodman, Spa Coordinator, Licensed Esthetician and Certified Massage Therapist at Eclips, reinforces the fact that the key to healthy winter skin is exfoliating and moisturizing.

“As we age, our skin renews itself less often than it did naturally when we were younger. It is imperative to allow yourself the luxury of a facial once a month or so, to help your skin with a natural shedding process that it can no longer perform as often as it should”, Woodman explains. “By exfoliating regularly, your skin will look and feel better and younger.”

Woodman continues, “Oxygen facials are another wonderful treatment all year round, but may prove especially helpful in combating dry winter skin. For skin to function properly and look its best, it must have a proper supply of oxygen.” Especially if you smoke, this oxygen supply dramatically diminishes as we enter our twenties, thirties and beyond. Without a proper oxygen supply from the blood, skin tends to appear dull and lifeless. With an oxygen facial, your skin is rejuvenated, having oxygen literally “pressed” into it. “Many skincare problems deplete oxygen in the skin and survive best in oxygen-deficient environments. Therefore, having oxygen facials can actually help clear up certain types of problem skin, such as acne and congested skin. Clean skin is more accepting of skin care products as well. So oxygenating your skin will actually make your normal skin care regimen more effective.”

Microdermabrasion: Microdermabrasion is a state-of-the-art esthetic treatment system, which exfoliates the outer layers of dead skin with tiny micro-crystals. This exfoliation stimulates the production of new, healthier cells and improves circulation. This can be used as a one-time treatment, but is recommended as a series of six treatments, to experience the best results. “Clients are very happy with the results of microdermabrasion, because the process is quick and simple, and they can see immediate results”, says Woodman.

Dry Brush: Dry Brush Body Treatments are a more vigorous form of the exfoliation that you can give yourself before showering. These services are provided in most upper-end spas for less sensitive regions of the body than the face and neck. “A natural-bristle brush is used to slough off dead skin and promote circulation. The esthetician will move the brush in circular motions, stimulating the lymphatic system, which carries blood right below the surface of the skin,” says Woodman. Usually spas follow this treatment with an intense moisturizing mask or wrap, allowing nutrients to immediately flood the newly exposed skin. Woodman adds, “This treatment will leave your skin feeling softer than it’s felt in years!”

Sunless Tanning: Another great salon and spa service to look into for beating the winter blues is full body bronzing. This is a safe and effective means of looking like you escaped to Mexico for the weekend. Most people are happier with the way they look with a tan. If your tan has faded and your appearance has dulled, this is a great way to bring back your summer tan, without spending a fortune on a mid-winter vacation to the tropics.

Dry Weather Haircare: So what do I do about my fly-away, static prone dry weather hair, you ask? Well, the answer is simple. Treat your hair well. Condition regularly and avoid over-stressing it, like blow drying or hot curling on a daily basis. For extremely dry or damaged hair, use a professional leave-in conditioner treatment to combat the strong winter winds. Select a moisturizing conditioner that not only offers you special humectants, but one that will also help to draw moisture from the air during the day. One trick you may want to try - once a week, shampoo your hair as usual and then apply a generous amount of a moisture mask. Wrap a warm, moist or damp towel around your head and leave it on for 15 minutes. The towel helps the conditioner penetrate deep into your hair shafts, providing a thorough conditioning. This is a great trick for all hair types, but will especially help those with chemically treated hair during the winter.

Washing your hair a bit less also helps. The natural oils that come from your scalp can actually help keep your hair healthier. The more you wash your hair in the winter, the drier it becomes. For relief of over-dry or chemically treated hair, try taking a day off here or there from washing your hair. Every person’s results will vary, but in most cases, this will help dramatically.

It’s always wise to use a combination of professional shampoos, conditioners and styling tools, available at any salon or spa. Ask your hairstylist which complete haircare system will work best for your hair. For example, it’s wise to use at least two different shampoos. Use one that will help to moisturize and cleanse your hair on a daily basis. Use a clarifying or deep cleansing shampoo at least once a week if you use any mousses, gels or sprays – so you can clean off any residue or build-up. It’s also best to alternate several different conditioners throughout the week, including a deep penetrating moisturizing conditioner at least once a week. Today, there are fantastic products and styling tool options available, including de-ionizing curling irons and blow dryers that will eliminate static electricity from your winter hair. With a complete haircare system, your hair will have the shine, luster, volume and bounce that you truly desire.

Total Image ~ Makeover Magic: Treat yourself to an exciting new winter image! Once your skin, hair and nails are healthy, it's time for your complete winter makeover. Healthy hair, when sculpted to complement your face shape and lifestyle, will be your best winter fashion accessory! Choose a new haircut and hairstyle with your hairstylist that is easy to maintain on a daily basis. A great hairstyle is one that you can make look as wonderful every day as it did on the day of your initial haircut!

Winter Fashion allows for an expansive variety of styles, with hair, clothes, nails and makeup to create your total image. Try to find clothes and wardrobe options that are a bit wilder than you would usually choose. Although winter blues hit many people, you can do your best to fight the downers with some uplifting clothes and some bright, inspiring makeup. Lively colors will make you feel lively, and may even perk up those around you. Don't look at winter as a time to let yourself go. Instead, take care of yourself! Keep healthy and build a new kind of you. A bright, shiny and stunning winter you!

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EDITORIAL NOTE: Laura Nolan is Marketing Coordinator at Marketing Solutions, Inc., a full-service marketing, advertising and PR agency, specializing in the professional beauty business. For more information, contact 703-359-6000 or send an email to mktgsols@mktgsols.com. Renita Woodman is the Spa Coordinator, a Licensed Esthetician and Certified Massage Therapist at Eclips Salon & Day Spa in McLean, Virginia. Other Eclips Salons & Day Spas are located Ashburn and Burke, Virginia. For more information on Eclips Salons & Day Spas or for a free hair and skincare consultation, call 703-821-0022 to schedule an appointment.

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