



Luxury with Lucia

Skincare treatments have finally come of age

It was the American wit Jean Kerr who, many years ago, said: "I'm tired of all this nonsense about beauty being only skin deep. That's deep enough. What do you want — an adorable pancreas?" Which just goes to show how things have changed.

These days the boys and girls in white coats have decided that a beautiful pancreas — or at the very least a beautiful immune system — is where beautiful skin begins. The new buzz from the world of creams and potions is about treating your skin on the outside AND the inside. We're not talking inner beauty of the spiritual kind here but inner beauty of the physical kind, based on providing the right vitamins and nutrients.

Pro-Ferm and Pro-Ferm+, which are hitting the shelves of Space.NK as I write, are the result of eight years of serious research carried out by a joint British and German team at the Biotechnology Institute of the Berlin Technical University, based on the notion that, for really good skin, we need to boost our immune systems. According to Dr Paul Clayton, one of the scientists involved: "We've oversanitised our environment and our innate immune system has become slack. On top of that we're at the end of the antibiotics era — they've been overused and have lost their effectiveness. Superbugs are just the tip of the iceberg: today we're almost back to the pre-penicillin era."

Lucia van der Post answers your style questions



The answer to the problem, the scientists say, is to build up the immune system, which not only will give greater resistance to disease but will boost cellular regeneration and improve the skin. The pills, creams and lotions that make up the Pro-Ferm collection are made with beta-glucans (www.beta-glucans.co.uk).

"This is an amazing molecule that almost everybody in beta-glucan research — including me — believes in so much that they give it to their children," says Clayton. The Pro-Ferm collection is what he calls "the first co-ordinated approach to skin matrix renewal".

Young skin cells regenerate at a much faster rate than ageing ones, and skin begins to look old, tired and slack when the rate of cell destruction outstrips the rate of cell renewal. Clayton says that the thinking about why skin ages has changed. "We used to think that the signs of ageing were caused by unavoidable degeneration but, in fact, the skin can be regenerated. It is slow — the reversal takes months — but it can be done."

Part of the brilliance of the science behind the Pro-Ferm range, which includes supplements as well as creams, is the tagging of beta-glucans to hyaluronic acid molecules (contained in the fluid that lubricates the joints), which deliver them deep into the basal cell layers of the skin where they promote cell regeneration. In simple terms, the idea is to make the skin behave as it used to when it was younger, "reversing ageing at a very fundamental level", as Clayton puts it.

Nicky Kinnaird, founder of Space.NK, which is selling the range exclusively, believes that Pro-Ferm marks a huge step forward in helping to delay skin ageing. "What I also like is that it is helping to boost a natural skin process, which means that it is also a great range for people whose skin is sensitive to ranges with active ingredients," she says.

The range consists of six products, including a Protective Skin Balm for men, at prices ranging from £35 for the men's balm to £75 for the Instant Lifting Serum. A two-month supply of the supplements is £55.

Pro-Ferm products are available at selected Space.NK stores or online at www.spacenk.com. For mail order call 020-8740 2085.