

# For best results, wait... how long?

Besides Rome, you know what else wasn't built in a day? Collagen. Or hair that grows in thicker. But if you stick with proven ingredients for the amount of time experts advise, you'll see real, long-lasting changes in your skin and hair. BY LAUREN BALSAMO

## 2 TO 3 WEEKS DANDRUFF SHAMPOO

You can't grab just any old moisturizing shampoo to clear up flakes and itching, because true dandruff isn't caused by dry skin—it's due to a yeast we all have on our scalps that overgrows in dandruff sufferers, which makes the skin cells shed too fast. "To stop the yeast growth, you need a shampoo that contains either pyrithione zinc or selenium sulfide," says Joshua Zeichner, M.D., director of cosmetic and clinical dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. "Really massage it into your scalp, then let it sit on your head for at least a minute before you rinse." You should notice less itching and fewer flakes right after the first use, "but it's important to continue shampooing

every day with the formula until your dandruff symptoms are gone, which may take up to a month," he says. "After that, use the shampoo once or twice a week—which may seem like a lot, but it'll keep dandruff under control."

To make sure hair stays nourished through the frequent washings, choose a hydrating dandruff shampoo, such as Dove DermaCare Scalp Pure Daily Care Shampoo (\$4.99, at drugstores).

### FOR A QUICK FIX:

Whether or not you color your hair, a few mists of a temporary root touch-up spray in a shade close to your hair's color will hide white flakes. Try Rita Hazan Root Concealer Touch-Up Spray (\$25, ritahazan.com).

## 1 MONTH SPOT FADER

It takes teamwork to get rid of brown spots or discoloration. A good brightening serum will improve your complexion after about four weeks—if you're also applying sunscreen every single morning. "UV exposure is one of the main causes of dark marks and melasma, so if you're not protecting your skin with broad-spectrum SPF 30 or higher while you're treating it, the sun will just work against whatever progress you make," says Noëlle S. Sherber, M.D., a board-certified dermatologist in Washington, DC. So slather on SPF in the a.m. and wear a hat whenever you're out in direct sunlight. Twice a day, pat on a few drops of a vitamin C serum—"a superhero spot fader that also prevents new ones from forming," says Sherber—before your moisturizer and sunscreen. Look for a formula that contains l-ascorbic acid, one of the most effective forms of vitamin C. We like Paula's Choice Resist C15 Super Booster (\$49, paulaschoice.com).

**FOR A QUICK FIX:** A tinted moisturizer or BB cream will help even out skin tone, and "one that's labeled *illuminating* will reflect light off your skin so discoloration is less noticeable," says Sherber. Try Stila Stay All Day 10-in-1 HD Illuminating Beauty Balm with SPF 30 (\$38, stilacosmetics.com).

## 6 MONTHS HAIR-GROWTH TREATMENT

Whether your hair is growing in finer (which is common after 40, when follicles can shrink) or you're experiencing hair loss, the only FDA-approved over-the-counter fix is minoxidil, the ingredient in Rogaine and other non-prescription treatments. "It stimulates the follicles to become active again so hairs grow in and stay on your head longer, and it also increases the diameter of shrunken follicles so they produce thicker, healthier strands," says Sherber. Since hair grows only about a half-inch a month, it can take up to six months to see a real change, and then you'll likely have to continue applying minoxidil daily to maintain the benefits. Women's Rogaine 5% Minoxidil Foam (\$29.99, at drugstores) is lightweight, so it won't cause heavy buildup on your hair between shampoos.

**FOR A QUICK FIX:** To amp up skimpy strands, work a dollop of texturizing cream throughout damp hair before you blow-dry or air-dry. "Unlike sprays that only target your roots, these products coat the individual strands with polymers to create the illusion of fuller hair all over," says hairstylist David Mallett, who works with Kate Winslet. Not Your Mother's Beach Babe Texturizing Cream (\$7, Target) is a nice choice.

## 3 MONTHS WRINKLE-FIGHTING RETINOID

Any cream that promises to make lines disappear in a week is the beauty version of fake news. Sure, if it's rich, the moisturizers will plump up skin so it *appears* smoother for a few hours, but to see a long-lasting change, you need to sit tight for several months. And using a prescription cream won't speed things up. "With both prescription retinoids such as Retin-A and over-the-counter retinols, it takes at least three months to experience significantly smoother texture and fewer lines," says Zeichner. "If you have deep-set wrinkles, you may notice more prominent results from a prescription cream than from over-the-counter retinol, but both take the same amount of time to kick in." Whichever one you go with, start by using it two to three nights a week, then build up over the course of a few weeks to applying it every night. "This reduces irritation and dryness, so you're more likely to stick with the product if you start out slowly," he says. Try Dr. Brandt Skincare 2% Retinol Complex Serum Nighttime Skin Renewal (\$69, drbrandtskincare.com).

**FOR A QUICK FIX:** You know that temporary plumping effect we mentioned? During the day, a makeup primer that has hyaluronic acid—which draws hydration to skin from the air—will deliver the goods and fill in lines for a flawless-looking complexion, even if you don't apply makeup over it. Try No7 Airbrush Away Primer (\$19.99, Walgreens).