

APOTHECARY

➤ A clean start to the New Year



SQUEAKY CLEAN

When to use clarifying shampoos, and when not to

If your hair has become less manageable, is tangling more easily, and feels heavy and greasy, it may need some detoxifying. "When you use a lot of heavy styling products—such as gels, waxes, and hair sprays—it can build up on the hair, making it look dull and feel as if there's a residue that won't wash off," says Elaine Mitchell, senior creative director at Sassoon Salon New York City Uptown.

The solution may be to switch from your usual shampoo to a clarifying version. These deep-cleaning formulas strip away buildup that accrues from hair products, environmental pollutants, and chemicals such as chlorine.

Although these shampoos do a great job of ridding hair of unwanted residue, they need to be used sparingly since they can deplete essential oils and cause hair dye to fade. "Clarifying

shampoos are strictly cleansers," says Doris Day, a dermatologist in New York City. "They don't offer any conditioning or damage protection." A deep cleaning once every couple of weeks is usually all that's needed.

A technique that works in a pinch is to apply a moisturizing shampoo to dry hair and work it in before rinsing. "It will help lift out some of the deposits that are left there," Mitchell says.

PRODUCTS TO TRY

1. DAVINES Solu Refreshing Solution, \$19

2. SUAVE Daily Clarifying Shampoo, \$2

3. FEKKAI Apple Cider Clarifying Shampoo, \$23

4. BUMBLE AND BUMBLE Sunday Shampoo, \$19

5. PANTENE Pro-V Clarifying Shampoo, \$4

ORGANIZING

MEDICAL RECORDS

Most of us have no idea what's in our medical records, much less how to organize them. But there are advantages to taking control of your files. "Each doctor you see will keep her own chart, and unless they are all in constant contact, there is a risk of ordering duplicate tests, failing to give a vaccine—because one assumes another doctor did it—or writing a prescription that interacts negatively with something else you're taking," says Davis Liu, a family physician at the Permanente Medical Group in Northern California and the author of *Stay Healthy, Live Longer, Spend Wisely* (Stetho; 2007). Here are some pointers.

GET COPIES Go to your primary care physician's office and ask for copies of your records. You are legally entitled to the files, although you may have to pay a small fee to cover clerical costs, such as photocopying. If you were under the care of a specialist for any duration—such as an oncologist for cancer—obtain copies of the notes from the first time she saw you, any operations or procedures you had, and the last office visit. In the event that the disease returns, your current doctors will know the history of your original treatment.

CREATE A SYSTEM Liu recommends setting up a filing system with folders grouped by doctor and then by date. He also suggests taking control of appointment reminders by adding them to your own calendar, rather than relying on your doctor's office to inform you it's time for a mammogram or a Pap smear.

GO ONLINE The other option is to organize your records using an online program such as Google Health or Microsoft HealthVault. The advantage is that you can access your records anywhere and share them easily with your doctors and family. The programs can spot potential drug interactions and track lab results and insurance information. The potential downside is that they are not covered by the HIPAA law (which protects patient privacy), although Google and Microsoft have pledged not to share personal information for marketing purposes without permission.

THE INSIDE STORY ON "CLEANSING" REMEDIES

An entire industry has been built around the notion that there are toxins accumulating in our intestines that need to be cleaned out periodically. But this isn't true, says Amy Foxx-Orenstein, a doctor at the Mayo Clinic and a past president of the American College of Gastroenterology.

"The body is not only able to cleanse itself, but the digestive system is set up to do exactly that," she says. When you attempt to supersede the process—with colonics, laxatives, teas, or "cleansing" liquid diets—you can actually cause more problems. "When you artificially move things through the system too quickly, not only do nutrients not have time to absorb, but you're altering the natural flora and good bacteria that keep the intestinal tract healthy," Foxx-Orenstein says.

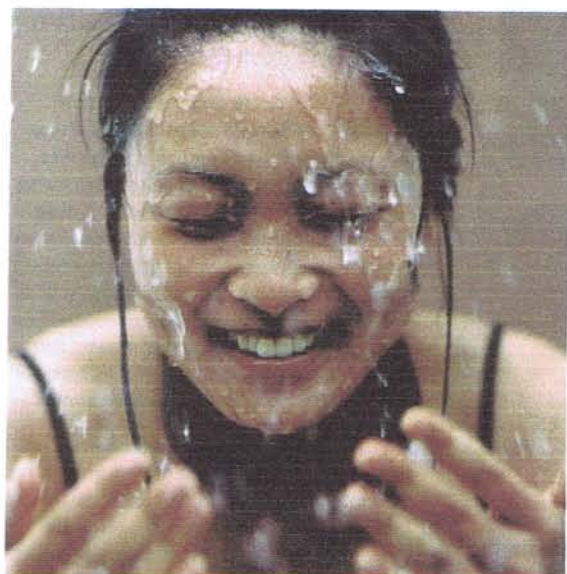
Plus, if your trouble is constipation, forcibly expelling the contents of the intestines doesn't really solve the problem. "You need to address the underlying issues," Foxx-Orenstein says. Try adding a bit more fiber to your diet, and go over any medications you're taking (including herbal supplements and over-the-counter drugs) with your doctor to determine whether side effects might be the cause.

Martha's pick



MARIO BADESCU Control Cream, \$15 (0.5 oz.); \$26 (1 oz.), mariobadescu.com

This lightweight cream "is a great product," Martha says. "I use it whenever I see a bit of redness, a touch of irritation, or if I get blotchy from the wintry cold and wind. It calms, soothes, and softens skin." The key ingredients are seamollient, a moisturizer derived from sea plants, and balsam Peru, an anti-inflammatory resin.



BUYER'S GUIDE

FACIAL *washes*

Cleaning your face: It's a simple act you've been performing at least once a day for many years, whether you give it little thought (grabbing whatever soap is handy) or seek out pricey cleansers that promise dramatic results.

But washing your face correctly is an essential part of your skin care. It's important, especially at the end of the day, to remove dirt, makeup, and excess oil. The right cleanser will leave your skin looking and feeling its best immediately. If skin feels tight and in need of moisturizer, your cleanser is too drying. If skin still doesn't feel clean, you're using one that's too filmy.

Don't expect your cleanser alone to perform miracles. "People put too much emphasis on the ability of a cleanser to fix a problem," says Mary Lupo, a dermatologist in New Orleans. "It's made to clean skin. It's not going to get rid of wrinkles or cure acne." Here's how to choose the right one for your skin type.

SENSITIVE SKIN

If your skin gets red and irritated easily, be careful about what you put on it. "Look for fragrance-free, soap-free creamy cleansers," says Lisa Donofrio, associate clinical professor of dermatology at Yale University School of Medicine. Avoid foaming or sudsing cleansers, because they contain detergents that can irritate your skin.

PURPOSE Gentle Cleansing Wash, \$6
CETAPHIL Gentle Skin Cleanser, \$8

DRY SKIN

When skin is lacking in natural moisture, you want to make sure you don't strip any away when you wash. Better yet, use a product that attracts moisture. "A face wash that contains glycerin will help pull water into the skin," Donofrio says.

OLAY Gentle Foaming Face Wash, \$6
LA ROCHE-POSAY Toleriane Purifying Foam Cleanser, \$22

AGING SKIN

A cleanser is not going to have a major effect on repairing aging skin. For that, use a treatment cream (such as one with retinoids), and choose a wash that complements it. "A cleanser with a mild alpha hydroxy acid will help exfoliate aging skin and make your treatment products absorb better," Lupo says. If retinoid treatments irritate your skin, counter that with a gentle cleanser.

DDF Glycolic 5% Exfoliating Wash, \$35 (for an alpha hydroxy acid)
BURT'S BEES Orange Essence Facial Cleanser, \$8 (for a gentle cleanser)

BLEMISH-PRONE SKIN

When skin has too much surface oil, your cleanser needs to contain ingredients designed to clean out pores. So look for facial washes with salicylic acid or benzoyl peroxide. Such ingredients will help unclog pores and kill bacteria, which can lead to fewer breakouts.

NEUTROGENA Acne Stress Control Power-Cream Wash, \$8
BIORÉ Blemish Fighting Ice Cleanser, \$6

Text by Sally Wadyka