

HEALTH MATTERS



BY LARRY
LUCAS

For Your Health: Right Choices Have Big Impact

They say in life that it's the small things that mean the most: making a friend laugh, seeing a child's first steps or spending quality time with loved ones. The same is true for your health.

Making the right "small" choices can have a big impact. But we tend to underestimate these "small" things when it comes to our personal health — like choosing water instead of soda to drink. This can be especially dangerous for men in our community who are at a higher risk for chronic diseases like obesity and heart disease.

I've lived with high blood pres-

sure for more than 20 years, but I help keep my heart healthy by trying to make the right small choices, such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator, visiting my doctor for regular check-ups, choosing an apple instead of a cookie and taking my medicines as prescribed.

It might not seem like it in the moment of decision, but making the right small choices can add up to a big impact in curbing the risk of heart disease and stroke and allowing you to live a longer, healthier life.

These small steps are particularly vital for African Americans — consider that men in our community are 30 percent more likely to die from heart disease than our white male

counterparts, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Obesity and high blood pressure play a big role in contributing to our poor heart health. African Americans are nearly two times more likely to have high blood pressure than other groups, and African American men specifically are 5 percent more likely to be obese, according to the CDC.

Not taking care of your heart can lead to more than heart attacks; it can also lead to stroke. According to the Mayo Clinic, stroke is one of the leading — yet preventable — threats to men's health and, if not treated immediately, can cause blindness, paralysis, memory loss and even death. It's important to pay

attention to the symptoms and get help immediately if you experience numbness on one side of your body or have trouble seeing, walking or speaking.

Men sometimes get a bad rap for treating their cars better than their bodies — not doing routine maintenance and only addressing a problem when it's a major one. I'll admit, I've been guilty of this, too, but this can be a dangerous way to live.

Regular check-ups can help catch the causes of stroke — such as high blood pressure — before it's too late, and detect other diseases like cancer while they are in the early stages and easier to treat.

It's important that we make time to do the small things in order to

prevent bigger problems from affecting our health — including taking medicines as your doctor prescribes them, without skipping doses or forgetting about refills.

For patients who need help accessing their prescription medicines to manage chronic conditions like heart disease and diabetes, the Partnership for Prescription Assistance is available to help. For five years, PPA has helped connect 6.5 million patients in need to programs that provide either free or nearly free medicines. For more information, patients can call 1-888-4PPA-NOW or visit pparx.org.

Larry Lucas is a vice president for Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America.

Achieve flawless skin by summertime

Winning the battle against blemishes, fine lines, and dull skin isn't easy—but with hot summer days looming, foundation, blush, and cover-up won't be the steadfast companions they were in winter and spring. To avoid a melt-down (literally), lighten up: Jeanine Downie, MD, of Montclair, New Jersey, says the surest path to a brighter, smoother, and clearer complexion is to take proper care of it. Here, the best ways to get your skin in shape for summer.

Use a Gentle Exfoliating Cleanser

The first step to achieving perfection, says Downie, is to chemically slough dead skin cells with a daily glycolic cleanser, followed with a physical exfoliator up to



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four times a week (oilier, more acne-prone skin can exfoliate more often). "Look for scrubs that contain spherical, pliable microbeads versus grains with rough, scratchy edges to avoid irritation," she says.

Go for Multitasking Serums

Next, Downie says to use a powerful multitasking serum. Her go-to: Vivité Vibrance Therapy ("It's stronger than over the counter products, and only sold in doctors' offices"). The gel contains natural antioxidants such as licorice, mulberry, grape, and green tea to brighten,

even skin tone, and protect against free radical damage—plus soy and retinol to build collagen, and glycolic acid to exfoliate. "A

lot of my patients use the product twice a day—once in the morning and once at night, while others only apply it in the evening," says Downie, who points out that the retinol in the product may cause sensitive skin types to become more susceptible to the sun's UV rays.

An effective yet less potent drugstore alternative to Vivité, says Downie, is the new Aveeno Ageless Vitality, which similarly smooths, brightens, and perfects.

If luminosity is your main goal, Avon also has a new product on the market—the Avon Anew Clinical Luminosity Pro Brightening Serum (available May 1) exfoliates and brightens skin, and contains a patented amino acid that

inhibits pigment production.

Try a Chemical Peel or Laser Treatment

For extra brightening and smoothing power, a series of chemical peels could be the answer: "Chemical peels are great for getting rid of dark spots and acne," says Downie, adding, "They also help with overall exfoliation." Downie favors glycolic acid peels (also known as alpha hydroxy acid peels) and salicylic acid peels (beta hydroxy peels) "because they work with every skin type to improve texture, tone, acne, and fine lines." To lengthen the time in between peels at your dermatologist's office, Downie suggests using an at-home chemical peels, Downie says many of her patients request a pre-summer laser treatment. In fact, the demand for laser resurfacing is at an all-time high, according to the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, whose 2008 statistics revealed it to be the fifth

most common non-surgical procedure performed in the U.S. While lasing with Fraxel or GentleLASE isn't always necessary, Downie says for those wishing to nix their freckles, it's a must (no fading cream will work).

Don't Skimp on SPF

No matter what cleansers, serums, or treatments you may employ, however, Downie says the most important tip for perfect skin is to apply an SPF 30 moisturizer or sunscreen, especially if you're using products that contain retinoids. "You should wear sunblock every day, rain or shine, January through December," she says, "Or else you could end up with more hyperpigmentation, darker patches, and deeper fine lines." For more information and tips on achieving a flawless complexion visit our Facebook Page "FaB Living w/Rebekah Star" and post your questions and comments. Until next week, Live Fabulously!

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