



ON THE WATERFRONT

Think hydration is key for the skin? The current trend of waterless products suggests otherwise.

By Meriam Ahari

IMAGE COURTESY: ANDREAS KUEHN/MAGNETTY

THE IMPORTANCE OF DRINKING EIGHT GLASSES OF WATER A DAY IN EXCHANGE FOR RADIANT, glowing skin is all too familiar. So it's only natural to assume that what's good for you on the inside must be good for you on the outside. That is, until we heard of Korea's obsession with the waterless skincare regimen—essentially, refraining from applying products on the face that contain water. Apparently, when applied topically, water does not equal hydration.

Chances are, the creams and moisturisers sitting on your dresser contain about 70 percent water, leaving little room for key players like antioxidants and vitamins that treat and nourish skin. Take a look at the list of ingredients in your moisturiser and, more often than not, water or 'aqua' will be listed as the first ingredient, meaning that the product contains more water than anything else listed after it. The problem lies in the fact that water evaporates. So when water-based creams are applied to the skin, the evaporating moisture pulls the skin's natural oils with it, leaving your complexion more dehydrated than before. One of the biggest beauty myths is to use a facial mist when flying. Low humidity air inside a plane draws moisture from anything it can—including your skin—which is why your hands and face feel so dry and scaly after a long flight. When this happens, many women make the mistake of 'hydrating' with a facial mist, but this only dehydrates the skin further. Cosmetic dermatologist Dr Rashmi Shetty broke it down: "When your lips are chapped, you want to lick them, but doing so only makes them more dry. This is because your saliva evaporates and pulls the skin's natural hydration with it."

So why do brands use water in products to begin with? For starters, it's more affordable than using expensive oils and botanical extracts. "To create a moisturiser or cream, the

product must have a medium of either water or oil," explains Dr Shetty. Water is the perfect solvent to combine all the different antioxidants and vitamins in your beauty concoction, because not only is it cheap, it's also non-irritating and non-allergenic.

While it's true you're likely to spend more on pure, potent formulas like facial oils and serums, you'll also be getting the most out of your money. Facial oils and serums contain high concentrations of undiluted ingredients—so concentrated that applying just a few drops goes a long way. These concentrated vitamins and antioxidants do not evaporate, and instead penetrate skin on a deeper level (than water which only sits on the surface of skin). Think of it this way—you wouldn't water down a good perfume. You could purchase a cheaper body mist containing two percent oil (and 98 percent water, alcohol, etc), but you'll also expect the scent to fade (or evaporate rather) faster than if you had applied an eau de parfum containing 15 percent oil (therefore leaving only 85

percent room for 'fillers' like water). The more water the product contains, the weaker the efficacy of the remaining ingredients that are being diluted.

Before you begin to throw out your water-based creams, it's important to remember that a waterless skincare regimen may not be for everyone. "If someone with dry skin requires an oil replacement because they live in a windy environment with low temperatures and less humidity, then yes I would choose a waterless product that contains more oils for them," explains Dr Shetty. "But if I'm treating an excessively oily, acne-prone patient, I would definitely prescribe a water-based product. There are times when we actually want some of the oils to evaporate." And regardless of whether or not you choose to adopt a waterless skincare regimen, drink your eight glasses of water a day. All skin types will benefit, and we're pretty sure the Koreans would agree. ■



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Elizabeth Arden 8 Hour Lip Protectant Stick, ₹1,080.



Neal's Yard Wild Rose Beauty Balm, ₹5,150.