

THE NITTY GRITTY
A 1600-word article by
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The Nitty Gritty

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‘If you want great skin that glows, make sure you exfoliate!’ say all the beauty experts.

Exfoliation is now recognised as an integral part of a beauty routine to ensure that skin stays healthy and radiates with health. Exfoliation is the removal of the upper layer of dead skin cells that can dull your complexion and clog your pores causing spots, uneven skin tone and rough skin texture. Sloughed skin is more receptive to treatments and moisturisers that you put on it, penetrating deeply and giving better results.

All skins need to be exfoliated. If your skin is oily, it helps clear the pores of dead cells that can lead to breakouts, and if your skin is dry, it helps get rid of the flakiness that can often lead to a dull, pallid and often greyish or ashen look that dry skins are susceptible to. However, when it comes to exfoliating, there are so many different ways to buff your skin, that it can become confusing. There are also differing opinions with regards to how often one should exfoliate. So how do you know which is the best method and what suits your skin? There are several main methods used to smooth your skin, and most of these will depend on what your preference is and what your skin type is.

The main thing to remember is that getting rid of the dead cells helps to brighten your skin, keep it clear and remove any roughness. Not all skins respond to the same type of exfoliator, though. Sensitive skins can become irritated and reddened even further,

so it's important that you pick the right type for your skin. It is best to pick an exfoliator that not only suits your skin type, but one that you will be happy using. Some people like a scrubbed feel, while others prefer something more gentle. The main categories of exfoliators are listed below.

Abrasive or Granular

These types of exfoliators usually consist of a creamy or gel base containing abrasive beads to buff skin. It's the type of exfoliator that most of us are well acquainted with . You can use these on dry or damp skin and rub the product *gently* in small circular motions over your face, avoiding the eye area. You then rinse away and apply your moisturiser as normal. These should not really be used more than twice a week. If your skin is dry or sensitive, you should avoid using these, although some exfoliators are gentler than others. A good one to try for all skin types is Karin Herzog Facial Scrub.

Pricey at £28, but it contains finely ground marble that will not scratch the skin. If you are addicted to that scrubbed feeling, you can try a daily exfoliator such as Dermalogica Daily Microfoliant, £30 which contains rice powder for a clean feel.

Cleansing Cloths

These are cleansers that are removed with a muslin cloth or a face flannel. They can be used every day and give a nice polished feel to the skin, while being a lot gentler than granular scrubs. They remove the need to use a separate exfoliator, and hence

save money too. Liz Earle's Naturally Active Skincare Cleanse and Polish, £11.25 is an excellent product – it cleanses and exfoliates in one fell swoop to leave you positively glowing. Eve Lom Cleansing Cream, £45 is expensive, but helps to refine and retexture the complexion. Or you can simply use your normal cleanser with a cloth to make it more effective. Be sure to wash and dry the cloth regularly so that bacteria and germs don't breed on the material.

Enzyme Based

These exfoliators contain enzymes that literally eat away dead skin cells or loosen them so that they can be rinsed away. Those with more sensitive skin will generally find that these types of exfoliators work best for them, as there is no abrasion involved that can irritate the skin. Kanebo Peeling powder, £25.50 (available from edirectory.co.uk) has a powerful peeling effect to clarify the complexion. Guinot Gommage Biologique, £24 is excellent for very sensitive skins, and is massaged into the skin until it thins to an oily consistency and is then rinsed away. You can also try Elemis Papaya Enzyme Peel, £25, which contains papaya and pineapple enzymes to gently dissolve away dead skin cells, leaving you glowing and radiant. If you want to try the benefits of an enzyme based exfoliator without the expense, then Daniele Ryman Exfoliating Papaya Facial Wash, £8.95 (from selected Boots stores) fits the bill perfectly.

AHA Based/Chemical

These literally break down the bonds between dead skin cells and usually contain some sort of acid such as glycolic or salicylic acid. They are brilliant for unclogging congestion and helping to prevent a build up of sebum under the skin. They sometimes come as a rinse off product, and can also be in the form of a cream to help exfoliate the skin over a period of time. If your skin is sensitive, always do a patch test as some of these formulations can make your skin red and peel. Good ones to try (which are usually well tolerated by sensitive skin) include Clinique Total Turnaround Concentrate, £30 for the face and MD Formulations Hand and Body Lotion, £26, to help renew the skin on your body and prevent ingrown hairs and spots.

Salon Treatments

Sometimes skin needs some heavy duty buffing. This is particularly true of scarred or badly blemished skin or skin that has a rough, uneven texture to it. There are several different ways that these can be treated, depending on what the problem is.

If your skin is seriously lacklustre and in need of a boost (particularly if you are going somewhere special), the Beaute Neauve facial from Guinot (from £30) is the best glow-getter. It uses fruit acids to gently but effectively get rid of dead cells and lift small blemishes, to give you a real glow that lasts for days.

There are also glycolic peels that you can try if you suffer from mild to moderate acne, although you need to bear in mind that any type of salon treatment usually

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requires several sessions in order to see maximum benefits, and that your skin tends to get worse before it gets better. MD Formulations do a salon based glycolic peel (from £40 a treatment, available from most good salons) where a facial is performed and then the therapist applies glycolic acid in different strengths (according to skin type) to peel the top layer of skin away. The only trouble with these types of peels is that in order to see maximum results, you tend to have to use recommended home products that need to be used regularly in order to get the best out of the treatment, and can be quite expensive.

Last but not least, if you need something a lot more heavy duty than this, then microdermabrasion is your best bet. This involves blasting the skin with aluminium oxide crystals to literally 'sand' the skin, and then different creams or serums are applied to help calm and soothe the skin while leaving you smooth and glowing. The best treatments to try, especially for scarred skin, includes Bioskin Las (from £250 for a course of 6), which also incorporates the use of an infrared laser to heal the skin. Crystal Clear (from £30) is another type of microdermabrasion treatment that works on a similar principle, but without the infrared. These treatments need not be limited to the face, and can also be performed on the chest and back if necessary.

DIY Salon Treatments

If you want professional results at home without the salon price tag, there are plenty of products that can achieve that 'just had a facial' type glow. Products fall into two

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main categories; microdermabrasion and glycolic peels. In general, glycolic peels are for more mature women who are concerned with wrinkles, pigmentation and dull skin, whilst microdermabrasion based products are best suited for women who are concerned about uneven skin texture, scarring and general lack of radiance. Good choices include L'Oreal Paris Dermo Expertise Refinish Microdermabrasion kit, £13.99 and also No7 Micro-Dermabrasion, £9.50. Both of these products contain the same aluminium oxide crystals that are used in expensive salon treatments, and both give impressively flawless results.

If you need more dramatic results, then No7 Advanced Renewal Anti-Aging Glycolic Peel, £16, and Avon Anew Clinical 2 Step Facial Peel, £15 (0845 601 4040) both use glycolic acid to deliver softer, smoother, younger and more luminous skin.

Experts are divided as to how often you should exfoliate your skin. The best advice here is to use your common sense. How frequent will depend on which type of product you are using, and the instructions on the back will tell you how often. As a general guide though, cleansing cloths can be used daily, while most peels and chemical or enzyme based products should be only be used once a week. Granular scrubs should not really be used more than two or three times a week, but you should let your own skin be the guide.

In the end, the method you choose to polish yourself is up to you. But done regularly, you will most definitely notice an improvement in skin tone and texture and you should find that skin looks and feels more radiant and clearer than ever before.

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(1574 Words)

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