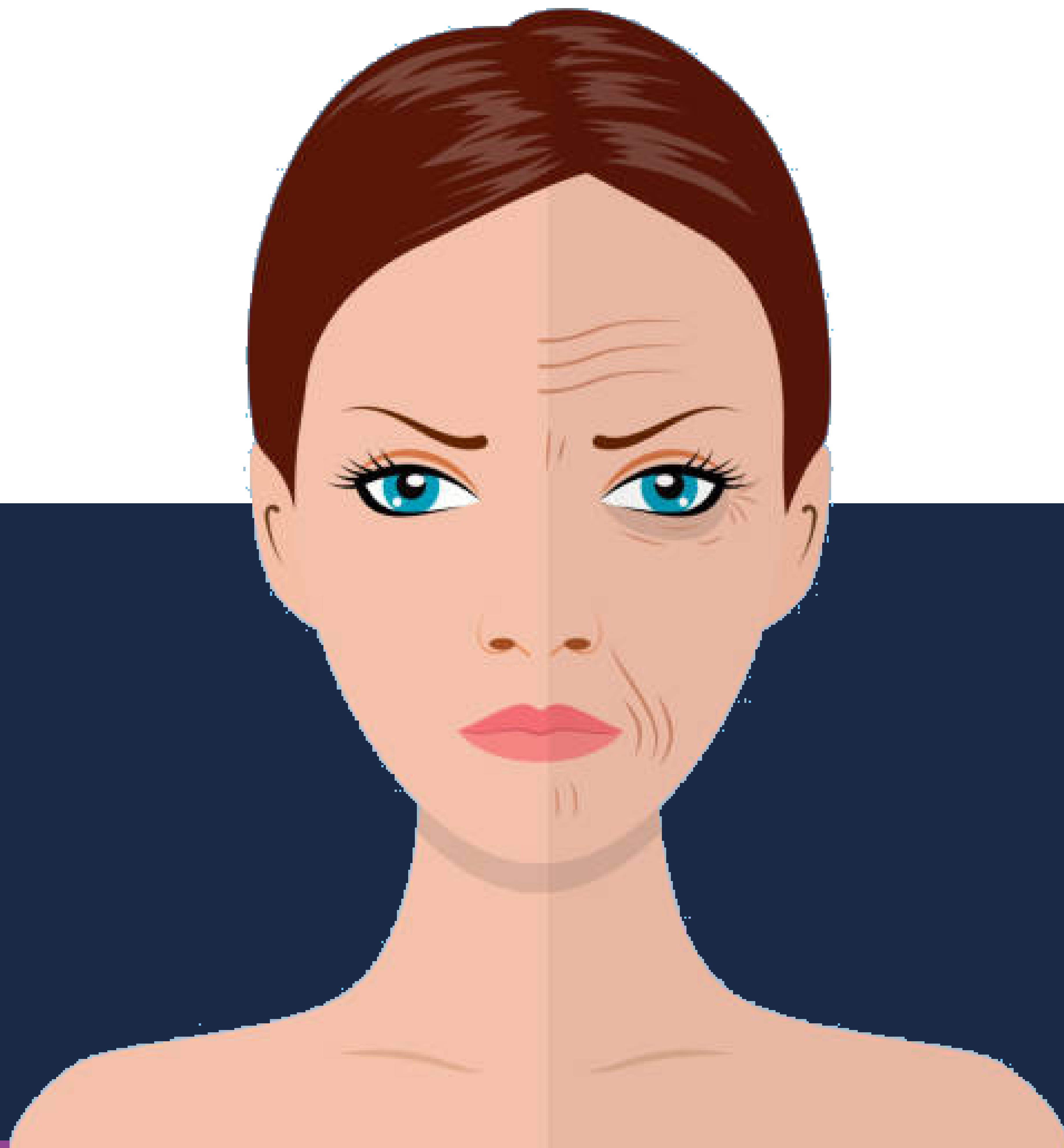


WHAT AGE SHOULD YOU START ANTI-AGING?



When we are young we rarely think about getting old. We are strong, vital and healthy and our skin is supple and wrinkle free. Life is good. It doesn't occur to most people to look after their appearance that they take for granted, until it starts to show signs of aging.

Some people start to consider anti-aging at the age of 30, when the first wrinkles start to appear around the eyes. Although many simply dismiss these as 'laughter lines'. The effects of the life we lead creep up on us slowly. Once we notice the effect of these gradual changes it is a lot harder to reverse our appearance.

For that reason it is good advice to start sooner rather than later. One way is for parents to instil good healthy eating behaviours into their children. So you could say anti-aging starts as soon as we are weaned. Making sure we eat lots of fruits and vegetables full of anti-oxidants is not only good for our bodies but also keeps our skin in tip top condition.

Drinking water hydrates our skin. This can start from a few months old. Your children will thank you for instilling good habits in them, from an early age. Although probably not until they are adults/parents themselves.

Dry skin can make us look old and tired at any age so getting in the habit of drinking water is a great anti-aging thing to do even when you are a child. Obviously, staying young looking is the last thing on a child's mind; but drinking water is great for all body functions and to maintain health. Therefore, if you can get your child drinking water anyway, it is a beneficial side effect.

Responsible parents will keep their young children out of the sun as much as possible. This is one of the most aging influences on our skin. Children that get sunburnt as a child are more likely to develop skin cancer as well. However, having a tan is thought to make us look more attractive; often described as a healthy glow. Young men and women often prefer to get the tan and won't give the aging factor a second thought. Therefore, if you really want to look tanned, don't go out in the sunshine or use a sunbed. There are lots of self-tanning products on the market which are a much healthier way of getting that golden glow. These can be used from any age.

However, be aware that even these products can cause aging with prolonged use (1).

Smoking is another cause of dry, tired old-looking skin. Many people are tempted to try smoking in their teens. Not only is it bad for our health overall it can have a huge impact on making us look much older than we are. Ironically, many teens start smoking to look grown up! Not smoking in the first place is another anti-aging tactic that can be started from the first time you are tempted to light up.

Something else that teenagers are tempted to try is that first alcoholic drink. The effect alcohol has on our body increases with age, as we are less able to process it the older we get. Young people enjoy the benefits of feeling tipsy without all the immediate, negative side effects. However, long term alcohol intake is not only a threat to life, it can cause lots of health issues and make us look tired and old. It is hard to overcome peer pressure, but if parents encourage their offspring to at least drink plenty of water when drinking alcohol it will reduce the negative aspects of alcohol on the skin and the rest of their body.

The point I am trying to make is that prevention is better than cure. And starting the anti-aging process at a younger age usually produces better results. If you don't take care of yourself from early on, it will be more difficult for you to reverse the signs of aging once they have started appearing. Unfortunately, getting young people to realise that is difficult!

So we only tend to think about how old we look when we start to see wrinkles, dark circles around our eyes, jowled cheeks and dry, dull skin. When we have been on this earth for a quarter of a century our bodies start to produce less collagen. Collagen keeps our skin supple, tight and elastic. So the best time to start anti-aging is when you are 25 (2). The second best time is whatever age you are now.

Using anti-aging treatments in your 20s trains your skin to stay hydrated. The more you use it, the better the skin can use it. Hydration is really important for keeping your skin looking taut and free of wrinkles. Hyaluronic acid is found naturally in young skin but decreases steadily with age. It actually helps to moisturize and plump out skin as it absorbs lots of water. In fact, just one gram of hyaluronic acid can hold onto litres of water (3). So use products with hyaluronic acid in, even from as young as 25. In fact, if you only want to use one product in your 20s this is the best. Purely and simply because it is a natural product.

There is one anti-aging ingredient that you can start using from as young as 18. That is Vitamin C serum. It is great to use because it is a powerful antioxidant, helping to protect the skin cells from damage from the get-go! It also protects skin against pollution and ultra violet rays from the sun (4).

The best results are obviously achieved by starting anti-aging treatments early on. But if you start after the age of 35, use creams that contain retinol, which encourages new collagen production and boost blood flow to the skin (5). Combine retinol creams with products that promote elasticity such as Vitamin E and vitamin A. As a bonus your skin will also glow because these products have lots of antioxidants in them. Having said that make sure that the creams you buy have good reviews as often the vitamin content is low. Taking quality supplements, or better still eating your vitamins and anti-oxidants in food, will protect the skin from the inside out (6).

The take home message is that protecting your skin from aging can start from any age, but the sooner the better. If you haven't thought about it yet, now is a good time to start.

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