

# SKIN SMARTS

## UNDERSTANDING THE FIVE FACTORS THAT AFFECT YOUR SKIN. BY BROOKE SMITH

In junior high, one of my more loquacious classmates approached me once and said, "Your epidermis is showing." Bein<sup>g</sup> the naive seventh grader I was, instantly looked thinking at my fly was undone.

Then, I clued in on the joke-epidermis is simply the technical word for skin. I have since realized, though, that skin is no joke, especially when it comes to understanding why our largest organ behaves the way it does. You see, it's not just about figuring out what type of skin you have (oily, dry, combination); it's realizing that there are many factors that influence its condition. "Unlike every other organ, the skin gets it from both ends," says **Dr. David J. Goldberg** dermatologist and director of Skin Laser

and Surgery Specialists of New York and New Jersey, "from the outside elements such as ultraviolet damage and everything going on inside the body like stress."

## GENES

You're born with 'em and you can't get rid of 'em. Genes are handed down from your parents. Now you can thank them or blame them, but that's just the way the cells split. "Genetics determine many of your skin's physical properties, such as its thickness, oiliness, tone and colour," says Mississauga-based dermatologist Dr. Karen UNIT "And you can't alter this." Your skin's physical properties determine its sensitivity to everyday products such as cleansers, toners and make-up.

Genetics also determine your predisposition to frustrating skin disorders like eczema, psoriasis and severe acne. If your dad has been aggravated by eczema all his life, chances are you're next in line.

But if you're blessed with fab skin (you lucky thing) smile and enjoy 4-and thank your parents every day.

## ELEMENTS

There may be such a thing as a perfect storm, but in no sense is the weather ever perfect where your skin is concerned. But unlike genetics, you can at least protect yourself from the elements. Depending on the time of year, your skin's usual condition can be exasperated. "In summer, you're going to be oilier, so you'll need a lighter moisturizer and a lighter foundation" says Dr. O'Neill. By that rationale, frigid winter air is going to dry you out, so your skin needs extra hydration. "You'll need to use more moisturizer or a richer one," she says. And we don't need to remind you about sunscreen, but we will: You must wear it daily all year even if you're out in the sun for only a short amount of time No excuses.

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