Skin Care 101: The Basics

The skin is the body's largest organ and accounts for roughly 18% of an adult's weight. It serves as a protective outer layer that keeps in moisture and keeps out invasive organism (like infections). It protects our organs against injury. It also helps regulate the body's temperature and has self-healing capabilities.

The best way to maintain healthy skin is to prevent skin damage from occurring in the first place. Wrinkles, age spots and leathery patches are all the result of skin damage from overexposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun. But the aging process for skin is unavoidable. As we age, skin becomes dryer and thinner. Repeated movements of facial muscles, such as frowning, smiling or squinting, cause wrinkles over time. Stress, gravity and obesity also contribute to aging skin. And because the skin is thinner, it is more susceptible to bruising.

A healthy skin care routine throughout life can reduce the symptoms of aging in the skin. Be sure to:

- Wash your face using a gentle cleanser and lukewarm water twice a day.
- Pat skin dry; don't rub it dry.
- Exfoliate the skin twice a week to remove dead cells.
- Apply a moisturizer to skin immediately after a shower or bath.
- Wear sunscreen with a SPF of at least 15 every day.
- For women who wear makeup, be sure to leave time each day when the skin is clean and free of makeup.
- Do not use tanning beds.
- Maintain a healthy diet and drink lots of water.
- Get an adequate amount of sleep every day.
- Quit smoking.
- Avoid stress.
- Conduct a monthly self-examination of your skin to detect any changes that might lead to cancer.
- See your dermatologist once a year.