

REPORT

BEAT IT

Start the year right by refusing to sabotage your skin and hair any further. By Justina Tan

SKIPPING/SKIMPING SUNSCREEN

Important: sun protection is an integral part of any skincare routine because it helps to slow down the signs of ageing. Some sunscreens go up to SPF (Sun Protection Factor) levels of 130, but more important than SPF is the amount applied. Dr Jean Ho, consultant dermatologist at Jean Ho Skin and Laser Clinic, says: "Many women use a fraction of the recommended dose, which dramatically reduces the efficacy. For example, an SPF 80 sunscreen when used at a quarter of the recommended amount will provide at most an SPF of three." For face and neck, apply one FTU (fingertip unit, which is measured from the joint crease closest to tip of index finger) and dab it on instead of smearing.

OVERHEATING YOUR HAIR

There's nothing wrong with blow-drying if you stop the moment hair is dry. But, very often, women blow-dry at full blast to save time – some even follow with a flat iron or curling tong. All this saps moisture from hair cells and cause locks to turn frizzy and brittle. Apply Kérastase Resistance Ciment Thermique (\$50) to towel-dried strands before blow-drying – its heat-activated formula protects hair fibre from heat-styling. If possible, spare your mane from blow-drying on weekends too.

INDULGING IN HOT SHOWERS

A hot shower or bath may help defray frazzled nerves, but can damage your skin

Muscles and skin on the neck and chest are weaker and thinner than on the face, so ageing shows up earlier in these areas.

"A warm bath is good for eczema sufferers because it disinfects, softens and hydrates skin. But keep the temperature of the water below 40 degrees Celsius, or the heat will weaken skin's barrier and make it prone to irritation and dryness," says Dr Ho. Also, avoid soaking in public jacuzzis for too long – the high temperature is a hot bed for bacterial and fungal growth, which can result in nasty skin infections.

NEGLECTING YOUR NECK AND CHEST

Are you guilty of stopping at the chin when applying skincare? Many women believe the neck is more resilient. On the contrary, the muscles and skin on the neck and chest are weaker and thinner than on the face.

so ageing shows up earlier in these areas. Moreover, they are often exposed to the elements. When cleansing or exfoliating the face, go all the way to the décolletage.

USING DIRTY MAKEUP BRUSHES

There's no point in having an elaborate skincare regime if your makeup applicators are filthy – you're simply transferring bacteria back and forth. Not only will makeup look muddy, you could end up with clogged pores, acne breakouts and bacterial infections. If you use your brushes every day, wash them every week (once every three weeks if you use them sporadically). Wash with a gentle shampoo, rinse thoroughly and let dry overnight.

