



Tough Love

Double-cleansing, twice-daily exfoliation and the return of facial brushes. Cosmetic companies are advocating a more thorough kind of cleanliness. But how clean do we need to be? Yuen Yi Ying weighs the pros and cons.

Back in the '80s and '90s, it was common to wash your face using tools like facial brushes and Buf-Puf, the famous sponge made of synthetic fibre-wash, to unclog skin. Oil-stripping cleansers, rough-beaded scrubs and alcohol-filled toners were the norm and women didn't think their skin was clean unless it squeaked.

But that changed as increasingly, studies on skin's hydration, irritation and moisture barrier showed that overzealous cleansing can aggravate existing skin problems and do more harm than good. Soon, anything that hinted at being strong quickly got a bad rep. And cosmetic companies switched to providing gentler cleansing options that were all about maintaining skin's oil and moisture balance.

So what are beauty brands doing now? They're telling us that we're not cleaning our skin well enough and recommending double cleansing, either with a makeup remover and facial wash or just the latter. Some have also introduced cleansing tools.

L'Oréal's Perfect Clean cleansers (\$14.95), for instance, come with

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feature

Dr Low Chai Ling, medical director of The Sloane Clinic, says that for women who wear thicker makeup, a proper cleanse may help to ensure that all traces of it are removed. "However, if you over cleanse with aggressive products or brushes, you also run the risk of causing redness and irritation. Furthermore, this may lead to more oil production as skin tries to balance itself," she explains.

So what's the ideal? That's rather hard to quantify. Different skin types require different routines. Instead, Dr Low says it's easier to tell you how clean you should not be. According to her, if skin feels red, sensitive and tight after washing up, then odds are, you've gone overboard.

Cosmetic companies are aware of the risk of taking cleansing too far. That's why their latest products have been designed to avoid that. For instance, when Clinique reformulated its Cleansing Lotions recently, it added hydrating ingredients such as sodium hyaluronate and glycerin. These toners are still intended for twice-daily use and their exfoliating effects remain as effective, but the improved moisturising properties mean they can better quell any irritation that may arise. The range's four different formulas also cater to the needs of different skin, from sensitive to extremely oily.

Clinique's electronic facial brush (\$375) has very soft bristles and reportedly oscillates at over 300 times a second. It has a built-in timer that switches the device off automatically after a minute, so no one overdoes it.

Similarly, the detachable rubber scrubbing pads that come with L'Oréal's Perfect Clean cleansers have 500 tiny soft bristles to exfoliate. Overzealous users are at little risk as they boost when you exert pressure to lessen abrasion. According to Janice Ho, senior product manager of L'Oréal Paris, the pads are tough enough to remove dirt without harming skin. In fact, they're sufficiently gentle to be used twice a day without causing redness or bumps. There are three versions to suit different skin types. Like Clarisonic and Garnier's gadgets, cleaning them is easy. Just rinse the brush or pad under running water and air dry.

Neutrogena's Wave Duo is a pebble-shaped electronic tool that comes with single-use exfoliating pads, which don't have any bristles. Meant for all skin types, you're supposed to stick them on the Wave Duo device and wet it before use. The gadget then vibrates at high speed to massage skin so pores dilate for deeper cleansing.

Ultimately, the brands are saying that it's all right to be tougher with your cleansing, but you have to be smart about it and do it right. If you're doing it twice instead of once, or using tools that are more abrasive than fingers, you have to be extra careful that the product is right for your skin type. Sensitive or dry skin should go for cleansers that are gentle and hydrating enough for double usage.

According to Dr Low, the best routine varies between individuals. It also depends on the user's lifestyle and needs. "A gentle cleanser is suitable for the morning, while more thorough cleansing may be needed at the end of the day for someone who wears thicker makeup. Some cleansers with brush heads may be suitable for people with very oily or dirty skin. Certain brushes are also more abrasive than others, so not all products deliver the same results. If you find that normal products which previously worked for you start to sting your skin, then you may want to be gentler when cleansing."



Step 1: L'Oréal's Creaming Milk (\$44) for dry or sensitive skin removes light makeup and dirt. Pump what you need on your fingers and spread it over a dry face.
Step 2: The Creaming Creamy Coke (\$34) facial soap bar that's gentle on dry skin - it removes impurities but retains moisture.



The reformulated Clinique Clarifying lotion (\$30-\$55) come in four versions for different skin types. Lotion 3 and 4 for combination and oily skin have salicylic acid to zap acne and boost cell turnover.



Step 1: Dermalogica's PreCleave (\$33) is an oil-based cleanser that helps dissolve the waxy layer formed when makeup mixes with sebum. The brand recommends using it before following up with another cleanser suited for your skin type.
Step 2: The Special Cleansing Gel (\$74-\$100) is free of soap, artificial fragrance and colour, making it gentle enough for sensitive skin to use when double-cleansing. Foam mist and sponges help refresh and calm.