THE STRAITS TIMES THURSDAY MAY 15 2008

URBAN

DOCTORS' ORDERS

POTIONS BY SKIN DOCTORS CAN COST UP TO $2,500 A POP. WHAT ARE YOU REALLY PAYING FOR?

WIN!
ACCURACY OF DEATH MOVIE PREMIUMS & BIOTHERM HAMPERS WORTH $1,750

POTENT POTIONS

Think of it as skin medicine. Here are eight doctor skincare lines available here.

FOREIGN BEAUTY BRANDS

1 Dr Brandt
Founded by American cosmetic dermatologist Dr Fredric Brandt, this brand promises to "repair and prevent damage to the skin" with three key ingredients: green tea, white tea and grapeseed extract. A bestseller is Pores No More ($80 for 30ml), which conceals imperfections while preventing breakouts.
$58 to $196, from Sscube The Apothecary, 03-19A The Centrepoint

2 Epicuren
A celeb favourite used by the stars of Sex And The City, this line was developed by American dermatologist Dr Harold Lancer. It uses enzyme-proteins to make the skin firmer by increasing its elasticity. Popular products include its Facial Gel Plus ($128.40 for 60ml), said to reduce the appearance of fine lines.
$8.60 to $449.40, from Apothecary + Co, B1-21 Raffles City Shopping Centre

3 Nutra Luxe MD
Developed by Dr Andrew Hawrych, an American plastic surgeon who feels that surgery should be the last option, this line uses vitamins, minerals and anti-oxidants to repair skin damage and reduce signs of ageing. Its Collagen X-plosion ($115.60 for 30ml) is said to renew the production of collagen and reduce wrinkles.
$47.10 to $262.15, from Apothecary + Co

4 ReVive
Dr Gregory Bays Brown, founder of ReVive, is an American plastic surgeon who says that going under the knife can't solve every skincare problem. So he came up with ReVive, which makes use of his own discovery – a bio-engineered molecule called Epidermal Growth Factor that revives ageing skin. He won a Nobel Prize for this discovery in 1986. Here, its best-selling product is Volumising Serum ($1,070 for 30ml), which plumps up volume and reduces the appearance of wrinkles.
$90 to $2,500, from Sscube The Apothecary

5 Sampar
Formulated by medical cosmetology specialist Patrick Soungio, this French anti-pollution skincare line makes use of what it calls the Urban Advance complex, a blend of shea butter, mint leaves and plant and milk sugars. The complex fights the negative effects of pollution on the skin. An added bonus – the products smell good because they incorporate the use of aromatherapy.
$88 to $338, from Medical Aesthetics Spa (UK), 03-10 Paisin Renaissance and 35 Ann Siang Road

HOME-GROWN BEAUTY BRANDS

6 Georgia Lee
This self-named line was launched by celebrity aesthetics doctor, Dr Georgia Lee, who is based at TLC Medical Centre. Her Treatment Make-Up Powder ($68 for 12g) is so popular there's a waiting list for it. The powder contains sunblock and acne medication.
$30 to $300 (available only in clinics), from TLC Lifestyle Practice, 3 #10 Orang Lipat

7 Skin Inc.
Developed specifically for use in tropical climates by the doctors of The Sloane Clinic, Dr Low Chai Ling and Dr Kenneth Lee, it makes use of vitamins and botanical extracts to fight the problems of oily, acne-prone and dull skin. One best-seller is its Ice Souffle Cleanser ($58.85 for 120ml), a deep pore cleanser.
$40 to $200, from The Sloane Clinic, 03-01 Chevron House

8 Skin Sense
Dr Patricia Yuen of Pacific Healthcare Specialist Centre came up with this line when it became clear to her that there was a gap in the market for sensitive skin. Her products have vitamin C as a key ingredient to reduce damage caused by ageing, pollution and over-exposure to the sun.
$45 to $140, from Pacific Healthcare Specialist Centre, 19-01 Paragon

Photographer: DESMOND FOO; Stylist: ANGELINE NEO

The amount of research that goes into doctor skincare products also adds to the cost.

Dr Low Chai Ling, 33, who runs aesthetics medicine clinic Sloane Clinic at Holland Village with her husband Dr Kenneth Lee, says it took them a year to launch their skincare brand, Skin Inc, in 2003.

They first conducted a patient survey to find out what types of skincare products were in demand. Then they experimented with various formulas to make sure the product does not cause irritation or sensitivity.

Tests were also done to ensure the product does not discolour or change in consistency over time.

Dr Low also reveals that once they hit on a formula they are happy with, they have to make sure that the product is stable and has a reasonable shelf life.

If a product oxidises in sunlight, for instance, they will have to design packaging that will help shield the product from harmful rays to prevent the breakdown of the product.

After that, the ingredients are registered with the HSA.

They are still conducting research to constantly upgrade the six products in the line.

Sscube's store director Yap Eng Kian, 35, says the wealth of clinical experience that goes into doctor skincare lines makes a big difference.

The doctor, he points out is "backing the brand with his own name", which means his reputation is on the line and if his product fails, his business might falter too.

But can you trust doctor brands more than other anti-ageing creams, moisturisers and such available?

Dr Low warns: "Consumers should not take all (doctor) skincare lines to mean they are naturally superior or safe or will not cause any allergic reactions. As everybody's skin is different, it's important to find products that suit your individual skin type."

Indeed, she adds: "If someone wants a simple body moisturiser for dry skin, I would send her to the local drugstore. There are many good commercial brands out there for daily maintenance of the skin."

The first 10 readers to call Medical Aesthetics Spa (UK) on 6233-3343 today get a free Sampar travel kit worth $88.

NURSE'S ADVICE

Doctor beauty brand tips straight from the nurse's mouth.

That's what Urban got when we met Dominique Tinkler, a spokesman who travels around the world promoting products of the American-based Dr Brandt skincare line.

There is actually a real Dr Brandt – Dr Fredric Brandt, in his late 50s, to be precise – and Tinkler was his nursing assistant for over 18 years, helping him in surgery and treatments.

She now promotes the brand, attending launches and press events in Europe and Asia.

And no wonder – she is a walking advertisement for the product. Tinkler declines to reveal her age but looks to be in her 40s.

She shared some beauty tips while in town last month.

❖ When you've applied your make-up in the morning and if you're in a hurry, you can quickly set it by blowing your face with your hairdryer set on cool.

❖ Sleep is vital. "That's when a lot of our hormones fluctuate. The body and the skin really need to repair and heal at night or it'll show in your skin," she says.

❖ Use sunscreen every day; and exfoliate your skin at least once every week.

PHOTO: DOMINIQUE TINKLER

❖ Smoking is a big no as it decreases oxygen in the skin, which will give your skin "a very yellowish-grey tinge", says Tinkler.

❖ Refrain from sugary foods because too much sugar is known to cause premature ageing. She shares: "Eating a low-sugar diet will keep you looking younger for a longer time."

❖ For women with extremely oily skin, she advises taking flaxseed supplement, which she says will help to decrease the oil that's produced by the sebaceous glands.

❖ Your skincare regime differs as you age. Cleansing is important in your 20s. Start incorporating antioxidants and exfoliation into your regime in your 30s. Include anti-ageing products when you hit the 40s.

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