

MIND
BODIES

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Men these days realise that their skin is also an important part of their body.

Mr Chris Chua, the founder of beauty salon, Face of Man, on why more men like Abdul Samad (left) are making facials a regular part of their beauty regimen

He believes in facials

Facials are no longer seen as not macho and more men, like music conductor Abdul Samad, are willing to pay for this skin care treatment. STACEY CHIA reports

Apart from a slight blemish on his right cheek, Mr Abdul Samad has almost flawless skin.

The music conductor has been getting fortnightly facials for the last five years on top of maintaining a good skin care ritual at home. He uses a cleanser, toner and sunblock daily.

Mr Samad, 40, has never had any major skin problems apart from the occasional breakout and blackheads, yet he still forks out \$150 for each facial treatment.

"It's just to ensure that my skin remains in this condition," he said.

Dr Eileen Tan, a dermatologist at Eileen Tan Skin, Laser and Hair

Transplant Clinic, agreed that even men like Mr Samad, with good skin conditions, should be concerned with its care.

Men - who tend to have oilier skin than women - are more prone to acne and tinea versicolor, a superficial fungal infection. Their skin is oilier because they

have more active sebaceous glands.

The oil produced by the glands is released through the pores of the skin. Men have naturally bigger pores and when dirt and oil are trapped in them, blackheads and whiteheads form.

An increasing number of men have turned to facial treatments as part of their beauty ritual.

Last year, Mask, a skin care centre that offers facial treatments for both men and women, saw a 15 per cent increase in its male customers.

"Men these days are more affluent, more influenced by the media and realise that their skin is also an important part of their body. Facials are no longer seen as not macho," said Mr Chris Chua, the founder of beauty salon, Face of Man. Started in 1992, Face of Man was then the only place that provided facials for men.

Dr Tan said that facials provide a thorough cleansing of the face, so she does not stop her patients from going for them, provided the beautician practises good hygiene standards.

However, if a person has problem skin such as acne, he will need more than a facial treatment and should see a doctor, she added.

Chemical peeling is one such treatment for acne provided by dermatologists.

It removes the superficial layer of the skin and, in the process, black and white heads of pimples are removed.

Meanwhile, men are paying more attention to anti-ageing products even

though they generally age more gradually than women.

Global data group Euromonitor International's 2008 report on male grooming products showed that anti-ageing products were the fastest growing segment with a 67 per cent growth from 2002 to 2007.

Dr Cheong Wai Kwong, a dermatologist at Specialist Skin Clinic, said a man's skin is thicker than a woman's. Therefore, it contains more collagen, a protein which helps hold skin together.

Dr Tan, agreeing, said: "A man's skin is about 30 per cent thicker and contains more collagen and elastin, hence he develops less fine lines and wrinkles."

Even as more men's skin care products go on sale, Dr Tan said men need not limit themselves to products for their gender.

"You should choose a product dependent on your type of skin rather than your gender," she said.

However, Dr Tan felt that a bar of soap is not an option for skin care. "Soap removes the natural oils and changes the natural PH level of our skin," she said.

Dr Cheong said that bars of soap which fall under the category of synthetic detergent bars like Cetaphil gentle cleansing bar, can be used on the face.

If you have no idea which products you need, Dr Tan recommended sticking with the basics. "A basic skin care regimen consists of a cleanser, skin toner, oil-free sunblock and moisturiser," she said.

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The Straits Times
RECRUIT**FACE IT, GUYS!**

Groom to bloom



If you don't want to go for facials for the sake of your appearance, do it for your job's. If you are well-groomed, chances are you will feel well-received.

Your appearance matters on the job. That's why even men are going for facials these days to boost their confidence. SOLOMON LIM reports.

Egged on constantly by his wife to do something about his "bad skin", Joe Tan, a 36-year-old electrical engineer, decided to go for a facial.

Said the father of two children: "I used to have a very bad complexion and started going to ladies' salons for treatment. These treatments were expensive and I felt a little awkward going to them.

Things changed for the better when he read about Face of Man, a men-only beauty salon, two years ago in an article in The Straits Times.

"When I first heard about Face of Man, I was a little worried. You know, men doing men's faces, but when I got there I found they are professional and most importantly, they are honest - they don't recommend products I don't need."

At the advice of facial therapists at Face of Man, Mr Tan's daily regiment now includes cleansing and toning three times a day. He also uses a face mask twice a week and goes to the salon with a male colleague once a month.

Now, he recommends facials to other male colleagues and friends but is chary that it can be a sensitive subject, not to be bandied about. "I don't just go up to my colleagues and say 'hey your skin is bad, go for a facial'. Instead, I tell them to go, just clean the face and relax.

I see it as just taking care of my skin. After all, I want to look good."

Mr Tan is a part of a growing number of men who have no qualms about having facials as part of personal grooming to help them in their careers.

But how vital is this?

When asked about this, Ms Azlina Ariffin, marketing communications executive at Adecco Personnel, told Recruit that more men are becoming aware of the importance of good grooming for job interviews and at the workplace.

She said: "Being well-groomed means being neat and clean - from your hairstyle to shoes and fingernails. Wearing business attire that fits well is important. Your dressing must be tasteful rather than expensive, with appropriate accessories such as a watch, cufflinks and a briefcase you are comfortable with.

"Looking like you care about how your look is a valid concern.

Good grooming gives a positive impression to interviewers and employers. A candidate or employee who dresses sloppily, wears dirty shoes and constantly reeks of cigarettes and alcohol, for example, does not give a good impression." But of course, it would not do to overdo it, she cautioned. "For example, walking into an interview room with a strong aftershave smell can be overpowering and a turn-off. The key word here is 'subtlety', not 'vanity'."

For Mr Prem Nair, 35, who works as a flight attendant, facials help relax and reduce the damage frequent flying does to his skin. He has been a regular at Face of Man for the past six years. He said: "I visited the salon out of curiosity. Men's facials were new to the market then and I felt that my face needed a touch-up. Indeed, facials boosted my confidence.

"The long flights to Europe and the odd hours give me eye-bags and make me look tired. The facials help make me look better."

MEN'S SKIN IS FROM MARS

Men have thicker skins than women, up to three times thicker, in fact. While the thicker skin contains more collagen, which in turn slows the ageing process, it also has more oil glands, which result in oilier skin and clogged pores. Men's skin is also more reactive than women's and is more prone to turn red in the sun or after a couple of drinks.

DOs AND DON'Ts FOR BETTER SKIN

Don't use a bar of body soap to wash your face. It is too dry and will cause facial lines to form prematurely. And don't use your wife's or girlfriend's skin care products.

Men living in the tropical regions don't need much skin maintenance, a basic cleanser and toner is sufficient, and some treatment cream for specific problem areas. For those aged above 30, a water-based moisturizer or sun-block would be useful too.

To maintain a healthy glow, Face of Man's Adam Chua said men should avoid milk, alcohol and coffee. Milk, according to Mr Chua, contains iodine that prevents the elimination of toxins in the skin and can aggravate acne.

Mr Chua also advised taking note of the five things: manage your stress levels, sleep well, avoid excessive sunlight, don't smoke and drink seven glasses of fluid daily.

High levels of stress aggravate existing skin conditions due to hormonal changes; managing your stress levels will reduce the amount and severity of breakouts.

Having enough sleep is needed to allow the skin to recover from the rigors of the day. Avoid the sun or use a good sunscreen if you have to be outdoors for an extended period of time.

Smoking damages skin cells by depriving them of oxygen. Finally, drinking sufficient fluids helps to hydrate skin cells, making them more supple and smooth.