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Do You Really Need to Wash Your Face in the Morning?

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Most of us are taught to wash our face before bed, and the majority of us are also told (by our dermatologist or aesthetician) to cleanse in the morning as well. But is the a.m. wash really all that necessary for maintaining healthy skin? Here, two professionals weigh in.

Yes, you should.

According to Houston dermatologist Jennifer Segal, MD, you definitely need to wash your face each morning. "Cleansing, both in the morning and at night with a gentle cleanser, is key for all skin types because it removes bacteria and dirt that accumulated during the day and overnight without stripping skin of its natural barrier." Another reason an a.m. cleanse is beneficial: Your pillowcase can harbor sweat, dust and bacteria that can irritate skin and cause breakouts, so washing your face in the morning can keep it clean and clear. "Cleansing when you wake up also reminds you to follow with skin care products like SPF, which is the most important step in healthy, beautiful skin!"

No, it's not necessary.

Assuming you're not one to hop in the shower when you wake up, Santa Monica, CA, dermatologist Ava Shamban, MD, says washing your face in the morning isn't necessary. "If you apply skin care products, like night cream, after cleansing your face, there's no opportunity for dirt or grime to collect on your skin while you sleep. There's also no reason to wash off those active ingredients you applied at bedtime. If you used a retinoid, it will have disappeared by morning and soaked into your skin. Ideally, any antioxidantsyou applied will have been absorbed, too, but if some product is left behind on the skin's surface, it can actually help protect against damage from UV radiation during the day."

The bottom line: If your skin can handle twice-daily cleansing without becoming dry and irritated, there's no reason to skip it in the morning. But, know that you are probably washing off any lingering anti-aging benefits of the skin care products you applied the night before.

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