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Is the Body the New Face?

Forget crow's feet—it's time to take care of those elephant elbows. Why anti-aging skincare is moving below the neck.



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The lines on our faces have been frozen, the dark spots faded, the flaky cells blasted away, the collagen revived with retinol. Our faces, it's safe to say, are in a good place. But what of our knees?

We are, it seems, collectively turning our eyes downward and realizing... one of these things is not like the other. Dermatologists and surgeons are noting a tremendous upswing in requests for anti-aging interventions below the jaw, from erasing forearm freckles to de-wrinkling crepe-textured ankles to re-plumping thin-skinned hands. “It’s not as if we have new technology or treatments to address these issues,” says Dr. Robert Anolik, who practices at the Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York, “but people are more aware of what can be done to improve skin on the body—whether it’s from reading about some of these procedures in magazines or seeing them on TikTok—and there’s a big wave of interest.” Essentially, anything that can be injected into or directed at the face is now being used elsewhere: microneedling on the stomach, hyaluronic acid in the derriere and the soles of the feet, radiofrequency on the thighs, you name it.

Sun damage is a primary culprit when it comes to signs of aging on the body—and its many manifestations are some of the trickiest to treat. Manhattan plastic surgeon Adam Kolker is using Lumecca, a “highly effective” pulsed light (IPL) treatment that targets pigmentation, skin texture and photo damage, especially on dark spots on the arms, legs, and chest. “It gradually fades pigmented lesions by delivering broadband wavelengths of light to break down excess melanin in the skin,” he explains. Kolker also treats body skin with celeb-favorite radiofrequency-with-microneedling device Morpheus8, which, he says, “is revolutionary in delivering exceptional skin tightening and collagen remodeling.”

Skincare brands are also stepping up to the plate, offering formulations with the sort of potent age-reversing ingredients—retinol, vitamin C, peptides—that were once present only in premium face and neck products. “For a long time body care basically just needed to smell nice and moisturize,” says dermatologist and clean beauty pioneer Macrene Alexiades. “People were very rarely looking for efficacy.” Now it’s a different story. The new Macrene Actives Skyros High Performance Body Cream was created to address the corporeal grievances Alexiades was treating in her practice, including redness, wrinkles, sunspots, bumps, and loss of tone. “I wanted to create something that was as powerful as any face product,” she says. “I did that by using face-grade ingredients such as peptides that target collagen and elastin, a cocktail of amino acids and brightening agents that help to reduce discoloration, and micro-encapsulated hyaluronic acids. Most HA molecules in body moisturizers are so large they just sit on the surface, but this is like delivering filler to your skin every day when you use it.”

One reason such ingredients were rarely seen in body products is that they can drive up the price precipitously, but those in search of head-to-toe dolphin skin do not flinch at a triple-digit tub of moisturizer. And just as we are willing to pay more for high-performance lotion for our limbs, so are we prepared to persevere through longer recovery times after in-office treatments to get our bodies on par with our faces. “If you use a laser to treat pigmentation on the face, it will heal after about five days,” Anolik says. “But on the arms you may be dealing with two weeks, and on the legs it could be more like two months.” All of that neglected real estate has some catching up to do, and if it means a month in long sleeves before the big reveal, so be it. “People spent so much time getting their faces in good shape and didn’t prioritize their bodies,” says Alexiades. “Now it’s just as valued to have smooth buttocks as it is to have a smooth forehead.”



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