

## Health &amp; Beauty

## OFFICE SKIN BUSTERS

If you wince when you catch your reflection in the mirror at work, **Alice Hart-Davis** is here to help

HERE'S an email doing the rounds offering "a revolutionary new way to stay healthy and young-looking in the office". It sounds good, so you click through to a website called computertan.com, which announces a technological breakthrough that transforms the electrical impulses in your PC screen into "factor-free UV rays" so that you can tan while you work.

Wishful thinking? Too scary for words? It's a hoax, of course, cunningly devised by the Karen Clifford Skin Cancer Charity to raise awareness of the dangers of tanning, but just for a minute it sounded plausible. No, computer screens don't emit anything as harmful as ultraviolet rays but it's clear that spending too much time in front of a screen in the office takes its toll on our skin as well as our general joie de vivre. Here's what you can do about it.

#### THE PROBLEM DEHYDRATED SKIN

Air con and central heating both remove moisture from the air, and dry air will in turn do its best to remove moisture from your skin.

**THE SOLUTION:** Downing litres of mineral water will not help lock in moisture. "The thing that maintains skin-moisture levels is the skin barrier - the very outermost layer of the skin," says Dr Nick Lowe, consultant dermatologist at The Cranley Clinic in London and LA. "If that is intact, it will trap moisture in to stop it being lost from the skin. The

way to moisturise the skin is not from the inside but from the outside."

Keep your skin barrier in shape with a decent moisturiser. Dr Lowe's Supercharged Day Cream (£16.59 at Boots) will do this and more with its anti-ageing ingredients and SPF15.

Eyes are often very dry in the office too, as a result of staring at a computer screen and air con. Put a coloured sticker in the corner of your screen to remind you to blink whenever you notice it, and try eye drops such as Murine to keep eyes lubricated.

#### THE PROBLEM COMPUTER-SKIN

"I don't believe that a computer gives off UV rays," says Dr Howard Murad, the eminent American dermatologist, "but it may well be emitting other harmful rays."

**THE SOLUTION:** Dr Murad recommends that we try to minimise the amount of time we spend in front of a computer, and take frequent breaks. But, he says, what we

really need is to review our lifestyles. Most of us are working longer hours, getting less sleep and eating more junk food. There are things you can do to help, says Dr Murad. First, eat a decent breakfast, then protect your skin as if you were going to the beach every day. Our skin and our bodies need to be hydrated but try to "eat" your water and get the fluid you need from the water in fruit and vegetables. Also, try to snack on walnuts for an omega-3 boost.

Dr Murad's Environmental Shield range of products is available at Harrods' Urban Retreat and through www.muraduk.com



#### THE PROBLEM DEPRESSED, STRESSED SKIN

"Sitting in front of a PC for long stretches of time is depressing as well as stressful," says leading facialist Amanda Birch, whose clients often complain to her about their office skin. "Your skin starts to

look devitalised."

#### THE SOLUTION:

Amanda uses a range of techniques including lymphatic drainage massage and a dose of Omnilux light therapy to brighten dull, distressed skin. "The bright light stimulates the pineal gland in the brain," she says. "That's the one that secretes serotonin, so the treatment works at an emotional as well as physical level, to boost the skin, improve the circulation and leave it looking healthy and glowing."

Amanda Birch bespoke facial with Omnilux, £150, at Gielly Green, 42-44 George Street, W1 (020 7034 3060).

#### THE PROBLEM CONGESTED SKIN

"It's dry, it's dull, it affects men as much as women, and it makes you look older than you are," says cosmetic practitioner Dr Vicky Dondos. "It's the end result of office life. Air con doesn't help but nor do stress, anxiety, infrequent meals, bad nutrition, flying, burning the candle at both ends... The net result is a build-up of dead cells on the skin, which can make it look dull and greyish."

#### THE SOLUTION:

Medical-grade microdermabrasion, a mechanical form of exfoliation, works a treat on this, swiftly removing those dead outer skin cells so that the skin regains its glow and treatment products penetrate more deeply afterwards. "It's very effective," says Dr Dondos, "and popular with men because it's less touchy-feely than a facial. It's quick, too - you can be in and out in half an hour."

Dr Vicky Dondos, Medicetics, 37 Connaught Street, W2 (020 7402 2033, www.medicetics.com). Microdermabrasion, from £65.

## FITNESS FACTOR



Feeling the burn: Victoria (right) with expert trainer Kathryn

## BESPOKE WORKOUT IN THE PARK

**What?** A personal fitness session in any London park with Kathryn Freeland, founder of Absolute Fitness.

**How hard was it?** At the prospect of exercising on a sunny evening in Kensington Gardens I found myself skipping gleefully up the steps of the Albert Memorial to start the session. As I had previously submitted a questionnaire on my fitness levels - mine are dangerously low - Kathryn had formulated an exercise plan for me. You're asked for your goal: mine was to tone up and feel energised.

We started off with a slow jog to warm up, thus mobilising my body and pushing up the heart rate. From here we moved into some faster running punctuated by short sprints - using the avenue of trees as a guide - and walk lunges to get my gluteal muscles, hamstrings and quadriceps working hard. Kathryn is more like a running buddy than a pushy teacher

so I almost didn't mind the hearty press-ups using a nearby bench (to toughen up my triceps), some static squats against the tree (engaging the hamstrings, calves and lower back) and another light jog. More lunges, planks and 20 upside down, tricep-toning crab movements later and I felt surprisingly full of energy and raring to go.

**Calories burned?** Approximately 435 for a 60-minute sweat.

**Ready for more?** Yes, I'm a convert. Goodbye morning lie-ins, I'm gearing up for some endorphin-enhancing exercise outdoors.

**Try it out:** Kathryn travels to any park in London, any time; starting price £57.50/hour or a new offer for Evening Standard readers until the end of May £10/person/hour for a group of five (020 7924 3311, www.absolutefitness.co.uk).

Victoria Stewart

## BEAUTY SPOT

#### LILY THE MINT

It's an alternative choice but Lily Allen's mint-green nails look rather fabulous. Those same bright little tips popped up on the Chanel A/W catwalks and when it comes to nail varnish, where Chanel leads, the fashionable follow.

To get the look you need a really bright green, like Barry M's new Mint Green (£2.95 at Boots, Superdrug or www.barrym.co.uk) or the acidic lime of Nails Inc's Long

Acre (£15, www.nailsinc.com). Just one tip: keep your nails short. Short equals a fun pop of colour; long is more Wicked Witch of the West. **AH-D**

