



Singer Cyndi Lauper, 71, has revealed she sees a dermatologist to treat her dry and itchy skin.

## CHANGING LAYERS

*We take a look at five common skin niggles you might expect to encounter as you age, and how to treat them.*

Words **KAREN BURGE**

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**S**kin behaves differently as we age, with gradual changes starting to show both inside and out. You might notice itchy and dry skin becoming more frequent as well as a feeling that your skin needs a little more TLC.

So, what happens to your skin as the years go by and how can you get the best out of the skin you're in?

Skin ageing is a gradual process that occurs in two ways, the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) explains:

*Intrinsic ageing* is the continuous natural ageing process that affects the skin of the entire body.

*Extrinsic ageing* is caused by external factors, such as excessive

exposure to ultraviolet radiation, which can act alone or on top of the normal ageing process to age skin prematurely.

With intrinsic ageing, skin begins to thin, collagen production slows

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DR CORINNE MAIOLO  
Dermatologist

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and elastin tends to lose its bounce. Adelaide dermatologist Dr Corinne Maiolo says the skin also becomes drier because of a drop in sebum – an oil prominent in adolescent years that protects and keeps skin hydrated.

“A lot of these changes will gradually start happening from your mid 20s, but you don't really see those changes in intrinsic ageing until much later down the track,” Dr Maiolo says. “It accelerates around the time of menopause in women as well, so we see more rapid change at that time.”

### COMMON CHALLENGES

Recent research found nearly 80% of adults aged 70 and over had at least one skin condition that was

bothersome enough to require treatment either at home (43%) or via a medical professional (57%). And more than a third had three or more skin conditions simultaneously. To keep your skin health in check, and prevent future problems, here are some conditions to be mindful of as the years go by.

### 1. Pruritis

This is the medical term for itch, and having itchy skin can become more common as we age due to lack of hydration, explains Dr Maiolo. “The first thing to do is make sure that you’re using enough moisturiser and correcting any dryness. And as part of that, don’t over-dry the skin after washing, minimise heat in the shower, and rinse off after swimming.”

### 2. Asteatotic eczema

Also known as asteatotic dermatitis, this condition is brought on when skin is so dry it turns into a rash and becomes inflamed, says Dr Maiolo. It often shows up on the shins, giving it the appearance of cracked pavers. To get on top of it, keep skin hydrated, apply topical solutions if recommended by your doctor or pharmacist, and reduce dry skin triggers (as mentioned above).

### 3. Seborrhoeic dermatitis

Known as dandruff in its mild form, it can cause flakiness and itch on the scalp, and on the face around the nose, eyebrows, forehead, beard and ears. Data suggests around half of the population is affected at some stage. “It’s related to the malassezia yeast, which is on everybody’s skin, but some people are a bit more

sensitive to it, and when there is more yeast around, generally their dermatitis will flare up,” Dr Maiolo says. Medicated shampoos and creams are available to treat the condition.

### 4. Benign skin growths

Ageing skin can become more prone to benign skin growths, including skin tags, seborrhoeic keratoses (benign wart-like growths) and solar lentigo (patch of darkened skin). These generally don’t cause any harm but if they become annoying or irritated, there are treatment options available to remove that overgrowth of benign skin, explains Dr Maiolo. Your doctor should check new spots and rule out anything serious.

### 5. Solar keratoses

These precancerous lesions develop on sun-exposed skin, appearing as rough, scaly patches. “We like to offer

treatment for those because we can then prevent progression to a skin cancer called a squamous cell cancer,” Dr Maiolo explains. “Not every lesion will develop into a skin cancer, but the more you have, and the longer they are there, the higher the chance over time that one might progress.”

### KEEPING SKIN IN CHECK

Choosing gentle and fragrance-free skincare is best to maintain healthy skin, says Dr Maiolo. You will also need protection from UV radiation with clothing, hats and sunglasses and a high SPF sunscreen.

“If you can keep your skin as hydrated and as naturally baseline as possible, then it’s going to look healthier for longer and it’s going to function better. When skin dries out and gets flaky, it can’t function as it should and that’s when we start to see problems, particularly in older age.” ●



## 3 WAYS TO GENTLY HYDRATE YOUR SKIN

1.

**Face and body cleanser**

**Cetaphil Gentle Skin Cleanser**, \$21.99. Boost hydration while gently removing dirt, make-up and impurities.

2.

**Body wash**

**Aveeno Skin Relief Body Wash**, \$18. Helps to relieve and soothe dry, itchy skin.

3.

**Body hydration**

**La Roche-Posay Lipikar Lait Body Milk**, \$40.95. A hydrating body emollient suitable for use on mild eczema-prone skin.