

Clay cures

We've unearthed a French beauty secret: green clay. Quarried from lake beds in France and pulverized into a fine cosmetic-grade powder, mineral clay makes a super do-it-yourself cleansing and detoxifying mask for any skin type, says makeup artist Efrat of Pierre Michel Salon in New York City. Mix up a gooey batch; slather on cheeks, forehead and nose as a skin toner and freshener. Or apply—carefully—around the eyes to relieve puffiness. Dab the paste on cuts and burns to promote healing. Although we're not recommending it, the French even add the clay to water as a gargle for sore throats.

The recipe: Mix two tablespoons of clay into a paste using bottled springwater or purified water. **If you have oily skin:** Add one tablespoon of lemon juice. **For normal skin:** Add one mashed avocado or papaya. **For dry skin:** Add olive oil. Leave on for about 15 minutes and rinse off with tepid water. A tablespoonful or two of the clay mixed with a few drops of water is also a handy emergency spot treatment for blemishes—left on for 15 minutes, it will absorb excess oil. (Rainbow French Green Clay costs \$5.50 for 8 oz at health food stores. If you can't find it, call Rainbow Research Corporation at 800-722-9595.)

—Karen Moline



Hair loss

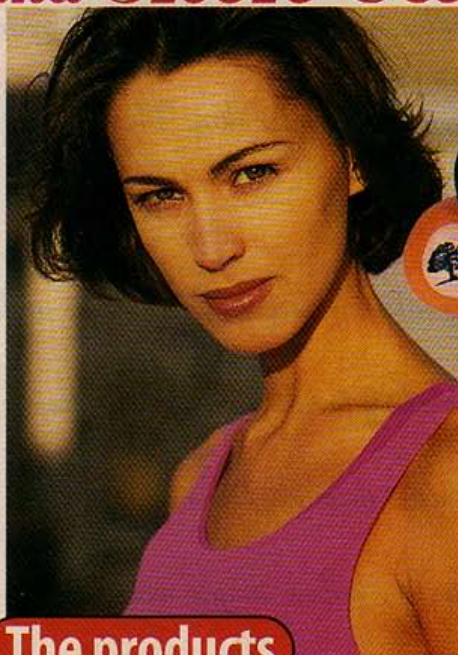
The Proscar treatment

A drug used for treating enlarged prostate glands in men may offer new hope to women with thinning hair. Finasteride, also known as Proscar, is an antiandrogen that inhibits the production of dihydrotestosterone (DHT), the hormone triggering male-pattern baldness in men and women. During a recent study, those who ingested Proscar had significantly reduced levels of DHT. "I'm far more optimistic about Proscar than I was about minoxidil," says dermatologist Walter Unger, M.D., an associate professor of medicine at the University of Toronto, who was an early investigator for Rogaine. **Note:** DHT is vital to male potency, fertility and muscle tone, and all three could be affected by long-term use of Proscar. Pregnancy caution: The drug may also harm male fetuses. International clinical studies begin in January.

Stress and skin care

FORGET BAD HAIR DAYS, LET'S talk bad skin days. Pollution, pressures of work and romance, traveling—all can cause flare-ups and blotchy, sallow skin. Beauty companies are now responding to the Age of Stress with products like Origins' Peace of Mind On-the-Spot Relief and St. Ives' Swiss Formula Cucumber & Elastin Stress Gel for Eyes & Face. Each is claimed to protect, nourish and enliven the skin, correcting its tone, decreasing lines and puffiness, even diminishing undereye circles. Do they work? "Emotions play a definite role in skin conditions," says Bradford Katchen, M.D., an assistant professor of dermatology at New York City's Beth Israel Medical Center. And "putting on creams certainly won't hurt, because they contain beneficial ingredients." Here's a soothing sampler of stress busters.

—Karen Moline



The products

Name Institut Esthederm's Instant Skin Repose Eye Contour Gel
Claim Protects sensitive skin
Name Givenchy's Relaxing Complex gel formula
Claim Soothes skin
Name Guerlain's Odélys Instant Relaxing Cleanser for

Anti-Stress Bath Pacs, Anti-Stress Face Pacs with relaxing masks, Anti-Stress Foot Pacs
Claim Contain herbs to detoxify skin and nerve ends
Name St. Ives' Swiss Formula Cucumber & Elastin Stress Gel for Eyes & Face
Claim Hydrates, relaxes skin



Sensitive and Weakened Skin
Claim Calms skin
Name Aida Thibiant's Complexe Antiage Protection Cream with Destressine and Nanospheres 100
Claim Protects stressed complexions
Name Cabot's



Name Zenue's Calming Shower Gel and Calming Body Moisturizer
Claim Calms mind and body (while it moisturizes)
Name Aveda's Calming Nutrients massage oil
Claim Helps fatigued skin
Name Clarins' Relaxing Shower-Bath Concentre and Body Treatment Oil "Relax"
Claim Aromatherapeutic
Name Prescriptives' Flight Cream
Claim Protects against air in planes that dehydrates skin
Name Aromaflovia's Stress Less inhalation beads
Claim Sniff for instant aromatherapeutic stress relief
Name Origins' Stress Buffer Bath Oil, Sleep Time Massaging Oil, Stress Buffer On-the-Spot Gel, Therapy Balls
Claim Oil soothes the psyche; squeeze the soft balls to calm nerves