

# Style

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"I hate narcissism, but I approve of vanity."

DIANA VREELAND, the late editor of Vogue

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## smooth operators

Good moisturizers  
don't have to carry  
a slick price tag

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Slathering on moisturizer feels like the perfect way to combat the effects of cold weather, bracing winds and low humidity.

But with the avalanche of moisturizers on the market, finding the best product is easier said than done. Is a \$100 moisturizer really better than the \$10 version? Cosmetics companies don't offer much in the way of clarification, so Style turned to local makeup artist Karen Duncan for the straight scoop on moisturizers.

**Q: How do moisturizers work?**

**A:** Essentially, moisturizers either keep water from escaping from your skin or they add water to your skin — rehydrating it.

**Q: Applying moisturizer throughout the day will fix the problem, right?**

**A:** Wrong. Picture this scenario: You've returned from a long vacation only to find that your

potted plants are dry as a desert and desperately need water. Pour water onto cracked, parched dirt, and what happens? It puddles or runs off to the edges and fails to hydrate your fainting foliage.

Your skin sports dead cells every second of every day. Without the proper exfoliation, those cells form a desert-dry barrier and prevent skin from absorbing the moisture it needs.

Buy the most expensive moisture cream you want — but it's all for naught unless you gently remove those dead skin cells on a regular basis. Duncan recommends using cleansers with light abrasive qualities called microbeads.

**Q: Why not just spray water on dry skin?**

**A:** That's a great idea — until the water evaporates. Check out many moisturizers — typically, water is the first ingredient. According to the American Medical Association, it is the water in these lotions — not the oils — that truly rehydrates the skin.

Oils, creams, lotions and serums lie on the skin and provide a slick surface, almost gluing down the dead skin cells. Oil does not penetrate the skin; water does. But the skin needs emollients — such as mineral oil, lanolin, beeswax, shea



Makeup pro Karen Duncan says moisturizers won't work unless skin has been properly exfoliated.

and cocoa butters and petrolatum — to help the water do its job.

Emollients trap water and prevent further evaporation.

**Q: Is cream better than lotion?**

**A:** Both are basically combinations of water and oil. A cream contains mostly oil (70 percent to 80 percent), while lotion contains more water and only 20 percent to 30 percent oil, according to Duncan. Drier skin benefits from creams, while oily skin tends to need the lighter lotions. And combination skin should default to

a lighter moisturizer first, she says. If necessary, people with combination skin should try a slightly heavier product on the dry areas.

"Just don't use too much moisturizer on any skin type. You don't want the natural sloughing process to get halted," she says. "Begin with the smallest possible dollop — say dime size — and place it only where you feel the tightening."

**Q: What's the difference between a \$100 moisturizer and a \$10 product?**

**A:** Most people will tell you \$90. And that's not far off the mark.

Consider the moisturizer Creme de la Mer, which costs \$1,200 for a 16-ounce jar. Manufactured by Estée Lauder, the grande dame of all that is cosmetic, Creme de la Mer is predominantly water, thickening agents and some sea kelp, according to Duncan.

"It also includes mineral oil and glycerin — a lot of emollients. I'd be cautious if I had oily skin," says Duncan, who pays less than \$10 for her drugstore moisturizer.

Her last bit of advice for those seeking moisturizers is to "keep it simple, stay informed, read labels, ask questions and sidestep the crushed snails."

### How long have moisturizers been around?

**WE KNOW** that jars of scented skin products were found in ancient Egyptian tombs. Some of these products were thought to have been used to keep the Egyptians' skin moist in the dry desert heat.

"Cleopatra had her looks perfected by bathing in ass's milk — then again, this was the same woman who used crushed carmine beetles to stain her lips red," says Duncan.

"And Galen, a Greek physician in the second century, is given credit for the original cold cream recipe of beeswax, olive oil and rosewater. He was also quite a fan of finely ground garden snails as a moisturizer."

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