

Rest and restore

The holiday season has come to a close. While frolicking under the sun or celebrating late into the night has created great memories, it has likely wreaked havoc on the body. The Straits Times speaks to beauty experts about how best to recover from the festivities and undo the damage caused to hair, skin, nails and feet.



Melissa Heng

SKIN OUTBREAK: SLEEP, DOUBLE CLEANSE AND DRINK WATER

Rich food, late nights and year-end parties can trigger zits and other skin issues. And depending on where you went for the holidays, air pollution can also harm the skin.

It is time to get your skin back into peak condition and glowing for Chinese New Year.

You cannot go wrong with beauty sleep. And always cleanse your face before bed.

"Double cleanse if you're wearing make-up," says Ms Xenia Wong, 24, founder of Singapore skincare brand Sigi Skin.

Double cleansing is a two-step approach. First, use an oil-based make-up remover or micellar water to remove make-up and oil

build-up. Then use a water-based facial cleanser to thoroughly remove sweat and bacteria.

But avoid using exfoliants while cleansing, says Mr Harvey Tsao, 41, regional manager (Asia) at beauty brand Chantecaille, as they may further irritate the breakout.

"You must also resist squeezing pimples as this may cause scarring and hyper pigmentation."

Do not forget to drink lots of good old plain water too – it can help the skin heal faster and supposedly flush out toxins from the body. Ms Wong says:

"If water is too bland, try infusing it with cut fruits to give it a refreshing taste."

Hair swells when it is wet, making it more fragile. By brushing it without any lubricant, you will create further friction and cause irreversible damage to the cuticles.



MR SHAWN CHIA, associate director at hair salon Chez Vous, on why you should not untangle wet hair that is not conditioned

DAMAGED HAIR: APPLY A HAIR MASK

Whether you took a winter trip or a sunny tropical break, cold weather or constant dips in chlorinated or sea water can leave hair dry, brittle and damaged.

If you live in a condominium or have a gym membership, Mr Shawn Chia, 30, associate director at hair salon Chez Vous, suggests making use of the steam room.

Apply a moisturising hair mask generously over damp hair without touching the scalp. Stay in the steam room for 10 minutes

while combing the hair occasionally to untangle it and ensure even distribution of the mask.

"The heat and steam will help open up the hair cuticles and allow the products to penetrate deeper," he says.

After you leave the room, allow hair to cool for five minutes before rinsing off the mask. "This will allow the cuticles to close and lock in the treatment for a longer period of time."

No access to a steam room or strapped for time? You can apply a

leave-in hair mask before bed.

What you should not do is attempt to untangle wet hair when it is not conditioned as this will damage the hair and cause breakage.

"Hair swells when it is wet, making it more fragile. By brushing it without any lubricant, you will create further friction and cause irreversible damage to the cuticles," says Mr Chia.

"Unlike our skin, our hair cuticles will never regenerate by themselves."

ROUGH HEELS: MOISTURISE AND PAMPER WITH FOOT BATH

Have you been traipsing about in your flip-flops on your holiday? Then your soles probably got some rough treatment.

Ms Teresa Tong, 34, a trainer at cosmetics label The Body Shop, says applying a moisturiser gel or lotion on your feet before bed helps to smoothen and soften dry heels and toes.

"If you can, wear socks too. They might be uncomfortable, but they help to lock in the moisturiser."

She recommends The Body Shop's Peppermint Intensive Cooling Foot Rescue (\$25).

A good habit is to file the bottom of your feet weekly to get rid of dead skin. "This will also help any product you apply absorb into the skin better," she says.

You can also treat your feet to a foot bath. Warm water and moisturising bath salts will help to hydrate the skin.

For something more indulgent, go for a foot treatment at a nail boutique. "Select a pedicure that includes a hydrating foot treatment such as a paraffin wax bath, which softens rough skin and also soothes aching joints," says Ms Tong.

If you can, wear socks too. They might be uncomfortable, but they help to lock in the moisturiser.



MS TERESA TONG, a trainer at cosmetics label The Body Shop, on how socks can help lock in the moisturiser gel or lotion applied on feet before bed

SUN-SCORCHED SKIN: MOISTURISE AND HYDRATE

That lovely bronze tan comes at a price – dehydrated skin and potentially painful burns.

Ms Wong of skincare brand Sigi Skin, has an easy fix for sunburnt skin: one ripe avocado and a teaspoon each of olive oil and aloe vera.

Mix them and apply the paste to the affected areas for 20 minutes before washing off. The paste can be kept in the refrigerator for up to seven days.

Ms Lily Kew, 48, founder of skincare label Kew Organics, says cooling the skin – by taking frequent cool baths and drinking lots of fluids – is key.

While the skin is still inflamed, you should avoid using heavy creams and lotions as they can "trap heat in the skin". Instead, use water-based products that are light and easily absorbed by the skin.

"Ideally, look out for soothing and hydrating ingredients such as aloe vera, chamomile and cucumber," says Ms Kew, who recommends Kew Organics' Megaboost Hyaluronic+ Concentrate Serum (\$79.70).

WEAKENED NAILS: USE NAIL STRENGTHENER AND KEEP NAILS AWAY FROM TOO MUCH WATER

Many women get their nails done for the holidays, but do not know how to take proper care of them.

Ms Valerie Chan, 28, assistant brand manager at nail salon Sally Hansen Singapore, says: "People tend to get traditional gel manicures over the festive season, but harsh and incorrect removal can damage and weaken nails."

Too much time in water can also make nails dry and soft. "Brittle or flaking nails often lead to chipping, tearing and breaking."

Applying a nail strengthener or a good base coat like the Sally Hansen Complete Care 7-in-1 nail

treatment (\$19.50), Ms Chan says, can help to moisturise and protect them against further damage. "It's like a shield and beneficial even if you have strong nails."

Also, wear gloves when you are doing chores like doing the dishes.

For those who enjoy getting manicures, they should not peel off the nail polish. "Even if you can't see it with your naked eye, you're actually chipping away microscopic layers from your nail bed (the part beneath the nail). This will damage the nail and give it a rough texture."

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