

*'Lighten' is no longer just a buzzword, it's a mood, a wish, a desire that identifies what beauty is all about*

>>> erase them. 'My sense, as a psychotherapist,' says Beresford, 'is that this is an issue that's speaking both to men and women, and is incredibly potent. Patients of any age notice the signs of ageing. The more you have ageing role models who do look great, the more you are going to have people who worry that they don't measure up. This applies to everyone, from people in their thirties and forties and over. It's something about the human desire not just to stay young – but not to be closer to death.'

*Escape the shadows*

But given that the cosmetics industry is built upon staving off the natural course of time, it's easy to see why the concerns of an ageing population have led to consumers driving the 'brightening' agenda as aggressively as the cosmetics companies are marketing their latest solutions. 'Lighten' is no longer just a buzzword, it's a mood, a wish, a desire that identifies what beauty is all about. 'Facial age and health perception is really about emphasising the light (soft, even, full) and minimising the shadow (harsh, dark, empty),' says Markey. 'And in any skin type, the evenness of the light reflecting off the skin is critical – sallow, rough, pigmented, blotchy skin just doesn't give the light reflex that suggests youth and health.'

Sarah Chapman, a beautician with a formidable reputation for her transformational facials, uses tailor-made massage techniques, machines (an LED optimised light therapy system to increase cell energy and collagen production) as well as products full of known antioxidant and active ingredients. Her new **Skin Tone Perfecting Booster, £57** (sarahchapman.net), includes plant extracts such as

Gigawhite (all of which have been tried and tested clinically to show results) and combinations of kojic acid, mandelic acid and vitamin C that have an inhibitory effect on pigment. Her formulation choice echoes that of several new serums, moisturisers and masks launching this year. (To swot up on this year's skin brighteners, see previous page.)

Skin creams may be making some serious claims, but cynics should be assured that new formulas do perform – albeit not for 30 days or so and, even then, improvements may only be subtle. All these companies are using ingredients that have historically been effective in many 'lightening' formulas, but there is scant robust data to support sweeping claims. That may simply be because clinical trials cost huge sums of money – which is why Procter & Gamble's Olay Professional is interesting. On top of its massive research into the human genome, which has enabled the company to identify the genes involved in ageing, as well as which ingredients (including niacinamide and retinyl propionate) can offer maximum benefit to ageing skin – Procter & Gamble has also conducted a sizeable clinical trial of this range against a reputable dermatological product with impressive results. The Americans have had the Pro-X line for some time – we get it this month (exclusive to Boots from 9 August).

But the answer may not lie in the latest dermatological approaches, either. Though skin experts know that all grades of exfoliation – from at-home scrubs and peels to dermatologist laser resurfacing or microdermabrasion – demand an SPF chaser, consumers are not always so vigilant. And so it is that the heavy guns – lasers, peels, and creams – that provide an alternative way to lighten the complexion can cause their own problems, too. 'In my clinic, I am seeing many more people with pigment issues, from skin trauma, hormones, UV exposure, overuse of AHAs and IPL,' says Chapman. 'We have to be careful when using lasers to treat pigmented skin,' says Markey. 'You need to deliver enough energy to produce the desired treatment outcome without triggering the post-injury pigmentation. Clinical