DON'T BE ROUGE FASHION

Skincare for the lockdown

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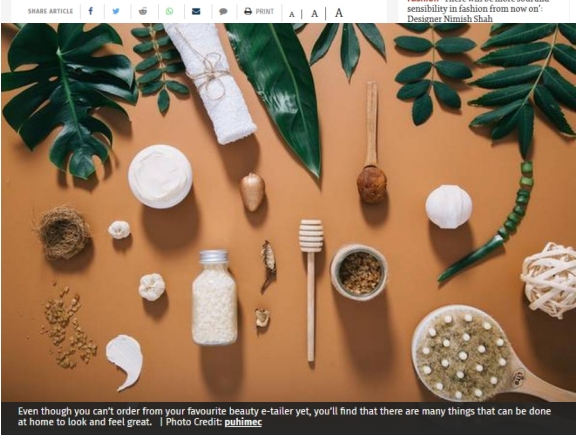

Even though you can't order from your favourite beauty e-tailer yet, you'll find that there are many things that can be done at home to look and feel great. | Photo Credit: puhimec

Dry-body brush, oil hair, apply castor oil on lashes and brows — dedicate a few minutes of your day to take care of your skin. It is the simplest form of self-care, writes this columnist

As India begins the third week of quarantine, our dishwasher stops working. After doing the dishes for breakfast, I sit here writing this column, with a mask of honey, milk and saffron on my face. Admittedly, there are more important things to worry about than the quality of our skin. However, as we have been given a pause, and an opportunity for self-care, it might not be so terrible to pamper ourselves even in the smallest way possible.

Aerin Lauder once spoke about the instant gratification of lipstick. I'd say this goes for any beauty ritual. Even when we had tightly-packed schedules, just the act of removing make-up at the end of the day made us focus, albeit for the briefest of moments, on ourselves. Personally, I feel self care and self-respect go hand in hand. The moment you choose to pull out those extra 10 minutes only for yourself, you're giving your subconscious the message that yes, I value myself.

These days, we have more than a moment or two. Whether you're working from home or are a full-time mum, you can work and yell at your kids with a mask and hair oil. Those who would earlier very rightly complain about not having enough time can now dry-body brush, oil their hair, apply castor oil on lashes and brows, because at the very least, we have an extra couple of hours that were spent battling traffic. And even though you can't order from your favourite beauty e-tailer yet, you'll find that there are many things that can be done at home to look and feel great.

Obviously the honey-saffron-milk mask is amazing and can be used everyday. All you need is a teaspoon each of raw milk and honey and a few threads of saffron. You can replace the saffron with a pinch of turmeric. If you're vegan, then try fresh aloe vera gel, some red *shakkar* and a drop or two of any oil. Paayal Mahajan, founder of the homegrown luxury skincare brand Essential Body Couture, taught me how to make a gently exfoliating cleansing balm at home. Equal parts moringa powder with raw honey. The balm will dry into a thick paste that can be made spreadable with a little bit of water when you use it.

The other at-home mask that I swear by is red lentil (*masoor dal* without peel) soaked in milk overnight, then ground to a paste in the morning. Add a pinch of turmeric to the paste, apply all over the face and then rub off when semi dry. You can make a small batch of the paste and store in your refrigerator for a few days.

Writing on beauty for over 15 years, I've realised that the worst product for the skin is commercial face wash. In fact, if you just remove this from your skincare routine, you'll find massive improvement in pigmentation, redness and hydration. Use honey for your morning cleanse and any oil (coconut, olive, apricot) for your evening cleanse. Wipe off with a steaming hot, towel to really clean out your pores. Women with the best skin haven't used soap on their faces for years.

Everyone is also worried about skin sagging without a dermatologist's intervention. But you can keep your skin looking tight, sculpted and de-puffed with a daily massage. I have posted several massage videos on my blog, however there are so many videos to choose from — the Japanese Tanaka face massage to the Ayurvedic *marma* point massage and the French tightening massage. Thank god for connectivity. The aforementioned Paayal also does a fantastic face workout that you can follow every evening at 7.30 pm live on her Instagram handle (@paayalm). I swear my skin looks so much better and tighter with her technique.

We can also rediscover hair oil that many modern hairstylists shun because they believe it makes your scalp condition worse. But here's the thing. If you oil your hair on a dirty scalp, it will obviously increase the dirt. So don't wait for your hair to get dirty. Traditionally, we would apply oil on freshly washed hair. I see no reason why we shouldn't go back to those days now. After all, there are no parties or meetings to attend. These days, I oil my hair thrice a week and keep the oil on each time for 24 hours. My hair fall has become minimal and my hair has also become quite long.

Ultimately, we cannot control the virus, the economy, or any of the repercussions that will slowly reveal themselves. But we can definitely use this time to nourish and heal. Because one thing is for sure, this too shall pass, and while we have these extra moments, let's make the most of them.

Vasudha Rai was beauty director, Harper's Bazaar, Cosmopolitan and Women's Health. She blogs at vbeauty.co.