

Helping hands

They work hard for you, so give them a little TLC...

Visit a top clinic for a facial and your treatment might involve a most terrifying device – a hi-tech camera that analyses your complexion at every level, before finally declaring your skin's "age".

The last time I experienced this, I was chuffed that it churned out a number three years younger than my real age. However, I fear that if it was pointed at my hands, the results wouldn't be quite so complimentary.

Impatience at the hand-dryer, a love/hate relationship with hand cream and a habit of peeling off gel polish have resulted in crepey creases, a mottled tone and flaky nails – my hands could belong to a woman twice my age. Here's how to help turn back the clock...

Hero hand creams

If your hand-cream regime has fallen by the wayside recently, now's the time to get back into it. Keep some everywhere – by your bed, on your desk, next to your side of the sofa. In sight, in mind, after all... If you really can't bear the greasy sensation on your palms and fingertips, apply it to the backs of the hands only.

Celebrity manicurist Sabrina Gayle loves **L'Occitane Shea Butter Hand Cream (£21.50; uk.loccitane.com)**.

"It instantly nourishes the skin, leaving your hands soft and silky," she says. Although technically from a men's grooming brand, my boyfriend and I each have a big tube of **Heath London Hand Salve (£10; heathlondon.co.uk)** by our own side of the bed. It gives hands a healthy, non-greasy sheen and has a mouthwatering spearmint scent.

As a cosmetic dentist and aesthetician, Dr MJ Rowland-Warmann, the founder of Smileworks Liverpool, is constantly washing and disinfecting her hands and has found a surprising solution for chapped hands – udder cream. "It's cheap as chips but it replenishes the barrier function of the skin and makes my hands like new," says Dr MJ. "Don't knock it until you've tried it."



Nourish your nails

They may have a small surface area but neat, healthy nails make all the difference to the appearance of your hands – and may distract from what's going on further up towards the wrist.

In terms of polish shade, the experts favour picking a bright over a nude. "A pop of colour will actually help your hands look more youthful," says Sabrina. "Orangey reds are more popular than blue-based reds, which can make your veins stand out." I love **CND Vinylux 2-in-1 in Lobster Roll (£16.95; lookfantastic.com)**.

Sabrina also advises breaks between gel manicures and, rather than picking at them, making sure you're removing them properly, either in a salon or at home using an acetone remover, like **Stylfile Gel Nail Polish Remover Clips (£10.99; styltom.co.uk)**, and a bit of patience.

In between periods of polish, apply **Nails Inc Gel Rehab (£15; nailsinc.com)**, which hydrates and replenishes distressed nails that may have seen one too many Shellacs hacked off.

Strengthen them from the inside out by taking **Vitabiotics Perfectil Plus Nails (£14.95; nationwide)**. They contain nail-boosting nutrients like selenium.

In the clinic

If you're serious about tackling these signs of ageing, there are a few clinical treatments available. **Lumecca by InMode (from £150; inmodemd.co.uk)** is an intense pulsed light (IPL) treatment that zaps sun spots, while **Dermapen (from £300; pulselightclinic.co.uk)** is a microneedling technique that stimulates the production of collagen. More pampering than procedural is **Jessica Nails' LeRemedi (from £38; jessicacosmetics.co.uk)**, a "facial for the hands" involving an exfoliation, mask and serum to rejuvenate skin.

Try a hand mask

Much like a sheet mask for the face, a glove-like hand mask looks fairly ridiculous on but gives instant – although short-lived – results. It'd be perfect before an event that will involve a lot of hand shaking.

Starskin Pro Micro-Filler Hand Mask (£22; beautybay.com) contains a cocktail of hyaluronic acid, peptides and plant-stem cells and is like a tweakment for the hands. Meatier mitts might find them a snug fit, but the results are dramatic – an instant reduction in the appearance of redness and pigmentation. Testing it on just one hand, my untreated one felt hideously calloused in comparison.

Skin Republic Age-Defying Retinol Hand Mask (£5.99; Superdrug) contains a weak form of hero anti-ageing ingredient retinol to help fight dark spots, dryness and loss of elasticity. Skin Republic advises using one twice a week for the first month to see real results, but these masks have a good number of immediate effects, too – plumped-up skin that's more even in tone.



Extend your skincare routine by rubbing in any excess facial product – exfoliating acids, serums, SPF's – into your hands, too