



Beauty giant Procter & Gamble commissioned the research and this month its brand Olay launches a range in Australia to address pigmentation issues. Olay Definity contains glucosamine for dullness and dark spots and niacinamide to improve collagen and reduce the appearance of fine lines.

Pigmentation and age spots are caused by a dysfunction in melanocytes, the skin cells that produce melanin and determine whether a person tans, freckles or burns, says dermatologist Dr Alexa Kimball of Harvard Medical School. "The two causes are sun exposure over time, and what the underlying skin pigmentation is like," she explains.

Luminosity is different. "Just as a mirror would reflect light back, your skin and your collagen in particular have reflective qualities. With age, the collagen doesn't reflect back as well."

Kimball had the products tested against a placebo on 200 women over eight weeks. Along with clinical grading, she used computer-aided grading to compare the differences between the before and after photos, digitally counting the visible dots and spots.

The products provided 78 per cent reduction in skin dullness and discolouration, and helped to rebuild the skin's collagen network. They work, says Kimball, by removing old pigmentation and limiting the formation of new pigmentation. And it pays to maintain the routine. "If you stop using it," she says, "the pigmentation will gradually return. [But if you use] sunscreen ... you might prevent it."

Ingredients were carefully considered. "There is concern about hydroquinone," she says of the ingredient banned in Europe. "[But] both niacinamide and glucosamine have excellent safety profiles." Although the results aren't as dramatic as those found at a dermatologist, "it's a way for lots of people to get access to help with pigmentation." ■



From top: Olay Definity Self Repair Serum, 50ml for \$40; Deep Penetrating Foaming UV Moisturizer, 50ml for \$40; and Intense Hydrating Cream, 50g for \$40.

lighten up

A cosmetics giant sees the light as the focus shifts from wrinkles to pigmentation.

Words: Alexandra Spring

The wicked Queen didn't stand a chance against Snow White. Not only was Snow White the fairest of them all, recent studies show that because of her white-as-snow skin she would have been judged as younger, healthier and more attractive.

Wrinkles are the usual suspects when it comes to determining a person's age, but Dr Bernard Fink, an evolutionary psychologist at the University of Göttingen in Germany, says the skin's colour quality is a vital indicator. "Skin gets darker with age as it loses its capacity to diffuse light reflection," he says. "Contrast becomes increased and ... melanin concentrations [are] more visible."

In 2006, Fink and a colleague investigated whether skin colouring plays a role in the perception of age, attractiveness and health in women. They created a set of female faces with varying skin tones and removed all lines, so judgements were based solely on

colouring. Responses were collected from 430 men and women and it was discovered that the more even the skin tone the younger the person was deemed to be, with a variance between actual and perceived age of up to 20 years. And the more pink the skin, the more attractive the face was judged by men.

ELECTRIC DREAM

Anyone concerned with brown spots and pigmentation problems caused by sun damage (that is, most Australian women over the age of 30) should investigate the Elos FotoFacial skin rejuvenation treatment. Elos stands for Electro-Optical Synergy, which combines a conducted electrical current with light energy. A technician will "zap" pigmented areas, which feels like an elastic band snapping quickly on the skin – not pleasant, but not especially painful.

The light and electric energies break up pigment, reduce redness and blotchiness and also stimulate collagen production to firm and

tone skin. The results are, frankly, remarkable. Within 10 days to two weeks after treatment, the skin begins to lightly peel and then you will literally be wiping away discolouration (and receiving a lot of compliments about your beautiful clear skin). Treatments are repeated every two to four weeks, with an average of five sessions for the best results.

Maureen Cole, paramedical aesthetician at Silkwood Medical, recommends the procedure for a mottled cleavage and the dreaded brown spots on the backs of hands. **Silkwood Medical, Level 4, 75 Grafton Street, Bondi Junction NSW, tel (02) 9387 3900.**