



Beauty

Sarah Vine

Calm before the storm

Bathtime rituals that will leave you ready to take on the world



Now that my children have reached the magical ages of 7 and 5, there has been a marked improvement in my general appearance. I no longer spend the hours of 6-8am with my hair sticking up, counting the seconds until the au pair trips down the stairs so that I can haul myself up them and spoon my carcass into a large pair of control pants. Nowadays, the children get themselves up, dressed and fed, which means that my own grooming routine has resurfaced.

In particular, weekends have regained some of their leisurely charm. Not only do the kids wake up later, they no longer seem to want to greet the dawn under a gentle drizzle in our local playground. Instead they bicker amicably and pull the house to pieces room by room

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– which is fine by me. Because I have a new rule: unless it's bleeding or broken, nothing is to interrupt Mummy's Saturday morning bath.

It's important to get the mixture in the tub just so. I generally avoid oils, since I can never resist the temptation to get my hair wet, which then means it goes all greasy. I much prefer a bath salt with the addition of a few drops of essential oils: still skin-softening, but not as heavy. Aveda's Soothing Aqua Therapy (£25; aveda.co.uk) – finely ground Dead Sea salts with light, crisp flower extracts – are ideal for this. Add a few drops of Aveda Singular Note Tangerine Oil (£12) to really lift the lot: fresh, zingy and invigorating.

With those tired limbs immersed in loveliness, it's time for some exfoliation. First, the ultimate in self-indulgence: Sjal's Pearl Enzyme Exfoliating Mask (£135; harveynichols.com), which contains plant and fruit extracts for a deep yet gentle exfoliation – all in a base of royal jelly and fennel to soften and soothe.

If the price tag makes you feel faint, however, try Skinceuticals Clarifying Clay Masque (£40; skinceuticals.co.uk), which I have found to be an absolute lifesaver on dull, tired-looking skin. This non-drying mask decongests pores and lifts impurities, plus a 5 per cent hydroxy acid blend exfoliates gently.

I follow either with Carita's Ideal Douceur Cotton Mask, a highly emollient, fragrance-free salve (£33.50; 020-7313 8780), or, if you're not scared of face oils, Darphin's Orange Blossom Aromatic Care dry oil, which is good for brown spots (£45; 0870 0342566).

On the body, Balance Me's Skin Brightening Exfoliating Spearmint Polish (£15; balanceme.co.uk) is a tremendous combination of sea salt, oils and invigorating mint which works well on stubborn areas of dry skin, such as elbows, feet and knees. (Remember, if you are contemplating a fake tan, you need to get all those rough areas as smooth as possible first.)

On emerging, I find a few drops of Aveda's highly aromatic and intense Beautifying Composition oil (£18) is ideal for massaging into warm, slightly damp skin; it leaves me smelling divine. Ideal for transcending the chaos that greets me as I finally unlock the bathroom door and step back into reality. ■

Why we love

Coral lip gloss



FROM TOP: **Best for staying put** Clinique Long Last Glosswear in Cabana Crush, £13.50 (clinique.co.uk). **Best for disco ball sparkle** Givenchy Pop Gloss Crystals in Island Papaya, £16.50 (01932 233824). **Best for subtle iridescence** Lancôme L'Absolu Crème de Brilliance in Orange Sacree, £18 (lancome.co.uk). **Best for precise application** Estée Lauder Pure Color Gloss Stick in Sunlit Coral, £16.50 (esteelauder.co.uk). **Best for sheer natural colour** Chanel Gloss Fluo in Pop, £19 (020-7493 3836). **PRUE WHITE**

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