



Have you got tech face?

Beauty

From selfies to Netflix, digital life takes its toll on our skin. **Emma McCarthy** helps us battle the blue light

WE'RE all aware that our collective smartphone addiction has its downsides. But crippling social anxiety and a complete inability to navigate without the Citymapper app aside, apparently it's the blue light emitted from our phones, tablets and laptops we should be really concerned about. And not just because all that late-night email checking has been exposed as a key culprit in disrupting our sleep, but because there is recent evidence to suggest that endless selfie-snapping could in fact be giving us wrinkles – #irony.

"High Energy Visible (HEV) light from digital devices breaks down the skin's DNA which can inhibit the skin repairing itself and cause oxidative stress on skin cells," says Debbie Thomas, an advanced skin and laser specialist with a clinic in Chelsea. "This results in free-radical damage, equating to loss of collagen, weaker skin, redness and pigmentation – all the signs of premature ageing."

Of course, the scientific research into the risks of HEV is as new as the technology itself. But some experts believe that the age-accelerating effects of blue light could actually be worse for our complexion than sun exposure.

"Skin damage caused by HEV may be as harmful as the damage caused by UVA and UVB light combined," warns dermatologist Dr Rachael Eckel, who explains that while the impact of HEV may not be obvious – like sunburn through UV exposure – the effects could be accumulative.

"Like UVA, HEV light may be another 'silent, long-term ageing wavelength'. It does not generate the immediate skin reactions triggered by UVB and UVA, but it may induce carcinogenesis and accelerated photoageing."

Dr Zein Obagi, revered dermatologist and founder of pioneering skincare brand ZO Skin Health, has also seen a rise in patients suffering from tech face. "With chronic and long exposure, the light from digital devices can cause damage to the texture of the skin," he says. "In my experience, I have been able to tell which hand a patient holds their phone in, as the skin on that side of their face takes on a dull, almost dirty texture which has not been induced by the sun."

So what can we do to avoid getting blue-light-itis? If looking at your phone less simply isn't an option – after all, those selfies aren't going to take themselves – there are solutions to help minimise the risk, including restricting your phone to indoor use only. "Avoid using your phone or tablet outdoors because the screen actually reflects extra UV light from the sun on to your skin, giving you double damage," advises Thomas.

Keeping your device further away from your face is another simple trick. "When you are on the phone, speak using earphones rather than having the handset near your ear," suggests Kate Kerr, clinical facialist at the Mondrian London spa. "The heat from the phone against your cheek causes inflammation which activates melanin production and can lead to hyperpigmentation and discolouration."

Kerr also recommends dosing up your skin with retinol to help boost collagen production and counteract problems caused by your device. A high-strength antioxidant will also help to quash free-radical damage. Try **SkinCeuticals Phloretin CF** (£150, katekerrskinhq.co.uk) in the morning and **Resveratrol BE** (£96) at night if you're plugged in during the evening.

Cutting-edge technologies have even led to the development of triple defence sunscreens designed to protect against HEV, UVA and UVB. ZO Skin Health's **Oclipse Smart Tone Broad Spectrum SPF50** (£53, zskincare.co.uk) contains the breakthrough ingredient **Liposhield HEV Melanin** – a fractionated melanin designed to act as a barrier against your device's damaging rays.

A selfie SPF? That's going straight to Instagram.

@standardfashion



Totally radical: below, from left, SkinCeuticals Phloretin CF, Resveratrol BE and ZO Oclipse Smart Tone SPF50



problems caused by your device. A high-strength antioxidant will also help to quash free-radical damage. Try **SkinCeuticals Phloretin CF** (£150, katekerrskinhq.co.uk) in the morning and **Resveratrol BE** (£96) at night if you're plugged in during the evening.