THE SKIN REPORT

# Read Your Skin Before You Change It

*A field guide to noticing dryness, shine, congestion, and texture with a little more precision.*



## Start with the sensation

A new serum often gets the credit or the blame for whatever happens next. First, identify the change as precisely as you can. Does skin feel tight after cleansing? Is shine concentrated in the center of the face by midday? Does roughness show up in a particular area? Notice the time, place, and context. “My cheeks feel tight right after I wash” gives you more to work with than “my skin is bad this week.”

Skin can look shiny in one area and feel dry in another. Surface oil and water loss describe different things, and a mirror alone can’t tell you what is happening at the barrier. Your observations are still useful when you bring them as descriptions. Mention makeup, friction from a face covering, and products that changed recently when they seem relevant.

## Create a fair comparison

Take a picture in consistent, indirect daylight if you want a visual record. Keep the distance and angle similar and turn off filters. Make a short list of the products you use every day and the steps you do less often, such as an exfoliant or a mask. Add the dates of recent facials or peels. This creates a useful sequence of events to discuss with your esthetician.

If your skin is prone to breakouts, aim for gentle cleansing. Scrubbing and picking can add irritation and make it harder to follow what is changing. Persistent or painful breakouts, or changes that leave scars, are a good reason to speak with a dermatologist. A facial consultation can still help you discuss the cosmetic services that feel appropriate.

## Make a skin diary worth reading

A diary can be as short as three lines. Record what you noticed, when it appeared, and the last thing that changed. “Tight around the mouth on Tuesday after an evening wash; started a new cleanser Sunday” is enough. Keep the wording descriptive. The sequence gives you a hypothesis you can discuss. It rarely identifies a cause by itself.

Compare similar moments. Morning skin under indirect daylight is a poor match for evening skin under an overhead bulb. If you keep photos, choose a distance, angle, and time of day and return to them. One image every so often will usually tell you more than checking repeatedly in different mirrors. If you see several changes at once, rank them by what is most uncomfortable or disruptive.

## Choose one priority for the appointment

Tell the studio what you most want to discuss. If your main concern is congestion, ask which customized facial to book and mention any products your dermatologist has recommended. Before leaving, ask what to keep in your routine and how you'll know whether the current plan is comfortable enough to continue.

## Bring the right vocabulary to a facial

"Congestion" is a common way to describe what you see or feel. Say what you mean by it. Small bumps you can feel, spots that look dark, and sore areas all communicate different experiences. Tell your esthetician where the concern tends to show up and whether it comes and goes. Share any prescription care so the appointment discussion can take it into account.

When you leave, try to finish this sentence in your own words. "For now, I'm paying attention to…" The answer might be comfort after washing, or how often a particular area becomes irritated. Agreeing on one observation makes the next conversation more useful. Bring the same product list back, with any changes marked, so you can talk through the sequence together.

Further reading

American Academy of Dermatology — acne skin care

Skin barrier review

Explore facials